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# NORTH OF THE TWEED;

OR

LORANCE LANGTON:

HIS LIFE, INCIDENTS, AND ADVENTURES  
IN SCOTLAND.

BY

DANIEL CROWBERRY.

"Should you, Sir Stranger, want a book,  
And cast on me a passing look;  
Heed not my outward shape or tone,  
But purchase, open, and read on.  
This done, next, when my parts you scan,  
Remember, sir, your fellow man."

THE BOOK.

VOL. I.

London:

T. CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER,  
30, WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.

1867.

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# NORTH OF THE TWEED.

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## CHAPTER I.

### FAMILY HISTORY.

It was about the close of the last century when the subject of these pages made his first appearance on the shores of merry England. He was indeed, at the time, of tender years. His number might be reckoned at about eight. He was the son of an opulent merchant and shipowner in Calcutta, and had arrived from India under the convoy of an English officer and a trustworthy nurse, the widow of a British soldier.

His father, Robert Langton, was descended from an ancient family, whose ancestors had held long and uninterrupted possession of extensive estates in Scotland, but subsequently falling among evil times when the bolts of civil war fell heavily upon their house, and becoming compromised in the rebellion, they paid the penalty of their offence by the forfeiture of their paternal lands, while the last lord of the soil sought an asylum in France and died childless. His heir, or next of kin, was a younger brother, but being alike under the royal ban, he contrived to escape to London, where he changed his name, and afterwards embraced some branch of commerce. Possessed of an energetic mind and superior education, this gentleman was most successful in his enterprises, and in due time his family followed him southward. Upon his death he left two sons and an only daughter. The latter married a wealthy banker of the city, and became the mother of a large family, now living in the full enjoyment of their fortunes.

The two sons, brothers of the lady, had during

their father's lifetime, embarked for India, where they also entered extensively into commerce, and finally became large bankers and shipowners. Of these brothers, Robert was the elder, who married the daughter of a general officer, by whom he had an only child, the subject of our narrative. Preferring the hardier climate of Scotland for the rearing and education of their son, the parents accordingly had him transported to England, as above observed.

But to retrace our steps for a brief period. After the total overthrow of the Stuart cause, followed by the re-establishment of peace and order, many of the forfeited estates were restored to the heirs of those subjects who had fallen under the Act of Attainder. Amongst the number to whom the royal clemency had been extended, was included the family in question, but, haplessly, as it proved, owing to the temporary adoption of another name, together with the obscurity under which for so many years the direct heirs had remained, and that in a remote part of the globe,

another claimant for the property, in the person of a distant kinsman, had pressed forward and usurped their lawful rights. This was an avaricious nobleman, of vast wealth and influence, and from whose powerful grasp, after years of possession, the rescue of estates of such value was represented to the legitimate branch as involving an enterprise at law of very formidable magnitude.

There was, moreover, between Robert Langton and the usurper, another intermediate relation of closer affinity, but who, in like manner with many others, had, by a crafty chief, been trepanned into the treasonable movement, whereby, being attainted, he suffered the family reverses consequent to it. This truculent individual had played the double part of first fanning the political flame, then betraying his party into the hands of the enemy.

This unfortunate relative had an only son, named John Langton, who stood in the position of first cousin to Robert, the heir at law and



father of our young hero. But upon the Indemnity Act coming into operation, his family, as recorded, was labouring under a hostile influence from parties high in political favour, and probably fearing the humiliation of a repulse, he proudly declined to appeal to the Government with his claims. But of his cousin more hereafter.

When the "Great Rajah of the East" had dropped her anchor in the Thames, which had borne Master Lorry (as his nurse fussily termed her lively charge) to the great commercial emporium of the world, he was speedily conveyed to a spacious mansion in Finsbury Square, then one of the fashionable abodes for the *élite* of the city. Being the son of a man of reputed wealth, he here found amongst his father's rich relations fond and loving cousins without number; and it was not until he had passed into the second year from the date of his arrival, that he was permitted to re-embark on a Leith packet for the northern capital.

With Edinburgh, however, his journey was not

destined to terminate, and in this city his stay was of limited duration.

Here the old friends of his father had either all died, or all traces of them had become lost in the lapse of time.

Indeed, the only relation in Scotland with whom his parents had for many years been in communication, or of whom they had received any distinct intelligence, was a spinster cousin, residing upon her property in the Highlands.

In her youth this lady had been endowed with a considerable share of personal attractions; but whether they had impressed themselves with any degree upon the susceptibilities of her relative, is unknown.

This much, however, is certain,—that, previous to his departure for India, the lady is alleged to have betrayed some indications in his favour, of a warmer kind than commonly falls to the lot of friendly cousins. Nor, it is affirmed, did this partiality suffer any abatement, even with his

marriage, but was cherished with singular fidelity in after years; and it is but due to record, on behalf of the gentleman, that this constancy was fully appreciated, not only by himself, but by his generous and sympathising wife.

When, therefore, he first intimated to her his intention to send his child home to Scotland for his education, she expressed an earnest desire that he should be confided to her care.

Her retired habits and remote residence at first appeared to his parents as obstacles to this proposal; but these were afterwards overcome, probably from the fact that she was an heiress, with the entire control and disposal of her property, while his father himself was in reality her nearest of kin.

## CHAPTER II.

## COMYN-CRYPT.

WITHIN a picturesque glen, surrounded by high and overhanging mountains, in the shire of ——— there stands (stood, at the time of our history) an antiquated residence of an hybrid style—being neither of the order of castle or mansion, but partaking awkwardly of both, with a contribution from the ecclesiastic—which crowns its architectural eccentricity with the perplexing name of Comyn-Crypt, commonly called the Crypt.

The castellated portion of this fabric owes its origin to a very remote period, and still includes within the range of its external walls some visible



traces of an ancient chapel; while in the outer buildings or offices may yet be seen a compartment retaining the name of Mews—the chamber in which, in bygone days, the sporting hawks of the gentry were commonly mewed or kept.

Out of the former of these, with some modern additions, but without regard to taste or uniformity in construction, the present dwelling has been fashioned.

That the proprietors had long been persons of rank and position in the county, they have left ample indications behind them.

Within the portion now under occupancy, there is a spacious room, partially wainscotted in oaken panels, overhung with family portraits, and partially lined with tapestry, containing designs of hunting scenes, stags and deerhounds in full chase, hawks and herons on the soar, knights in armour, and chieftains in full Highland costume, with fountains in play, and northern landscapes; of the latter, one represents Lochleven Castle, with the escape of Mary Stuart.

Most of these, though betokening decay, afford spirited pictures of the olden times.

The present owner and occupant of this curious habitation is a maiden lady of discreet years, maintaining a monotonous and somewhat superannuated establishment, in benefitting harmony with the mason-work. The baptismal name of this heiress is Jean Laurentia Murray, but she is better known amongst the inhabitants of a small village upon the estate by the title of "Leddie Jean." The roll of her domestics consists of an aged housekeeper, an elderly butler, two sedate maids, a coachman, combining with his office that of groom, with a helper, or errand-boy.

Obviously, as now seen, Comyn-Crypt is upon the eve of a great event. For upwards of three days an unusual stir has been visible within the old walls. In truth, as by the sound of an enchanter's trumpet, it appears to have suddenly awakened from an age of lethargy. Even the drowsy dogs upon the rugs are pricking up their ears, raising themselves up upon their gouty

legs, and looking wonderingly about them. Upon three several occasions within the last forty-eight hours, have the butler and houskeeper jostled each other in their hurry to and fro within the winding passages. Something is clearly on foot, far exceeding the excitement of an ordinary "cleaning day." From the neighbouring village extra hands have been called in, and there have been lighting of fires, rubbing of windows, beating of carpets, shifting of furniture, airing of bedding, with other domestic toils, under such active operation that the servants, for once in their lifetime, have found an apology for an appetite and a real excuse for going to sleep in chairs.

But this sudden awakening has not been confined within the walls of the mansion alone; it has extended itself to the outer buildings, and, in the general resuscitation, the old chaise has not been passed by. The yellow bottom, like a capacious boat on the waves of the sea, comes

rocking out upon its high springs, clear and shiny as the saffron flower, which lends to it its nominal lustre; while the family crest, and silver mountings upon the harness, glitter in the sun with unwonted splendour. In this burnished state, the rumbling equipage has now been summoned to the hall-door. It has to undergo a due inspection from Miss Murray, and this is to be effected through the streaky old glass-work of her window—the lady prudently eschews the door, from a constant dread she has of the east wind, which, indeed, would seem to be as constantly lying in wait for her.

The chariot has passed muster, and there is now an arm-load of shawls and wrappers thrust within the door, followed by a basket containing boiled eggs, cold fowl, and sundry other tit-bits of provision. Finally, an elderly gentleman, in the rank of seneschal, enters the carriage, pulls down the blinds, and the scene closes with an essay by the two bays at a lazy trot. The

chaise has to meet the South coach, at the hour of four in the afternoon, and the Cross-roads are about nine miles distant.

Precisely as the clock strikes seven on the same evening, the rumbling sound of the returning vehicle is distinctly heard in a long avenue of trees conducting to the mansion. Anon, the horses, without one turn of a hair on their coats—nothing in this establishment must be pressed—are drawn up in stately order, under the porch. Soon the goodly presence of the grey-headed butler is seen to emerge from the door, followed closely by a lively-looking little fellow, half-smothered in shawls, although, be it observed, the time of the year is mid-summer.

Miss Murray being apprised of the arrival, and having resumed her former position at the window, is now eyeing, with extraordinary interest, these proceedings at her door, through the double medium of her gold spectacles and the twisted panes.

“I could have known that child to be a Lang-



ton in a multitude. It has Robert's very nose and mouth. Bless the little creature!"

So said the lady aloud to herself; and so soon as a report was confirmed that the bolts of the hall-door had been duly shot against her implacable enemy, the "east wind"—it was everywhere else a mild breeze from the south, but with a malignity unspeakable in its humours, as with its sister in the west, it always, at this door, wheeled round and clothed itself in eastern terrors—she proceeded to meet and embrace the little stranger, her "nephew."

A suite of separate apartments, as if for a prince, have been arranged and remodelled for his reception, and huge fires of hewn timber and turf are now glowing in each stove, with intensity of heat sufficient to scare from the gates every damp and daring wind from either point of our compass. The welcome guest is now formally inducted. On his journey from the Cross-roads, he and the butler had evidently entered into a bond of amity; and the latter

being first in possession of his acquaintance, had undertaken to introduce him to the general household, and especially to all the dogs and other quadrupeds upon the premises.

By Leddie Jean, he has been received with all the gracious and tender manifestations which could reasonably be expected from a spinster lady, who has long led a life of seclusion, of habitually stiff, formal and stately bearing, and from whose corporeal presence and personal address all the green suppleness and vital sweetness of youth have passed away and been forgotten.

At first sight the little stranger did not think he would *like* his aunt,—not, certainly, so much as the butler; and the dull and sombre appearance of the house into which he had been ushered contrasted unfavourably in his mind with the fashionable style and lively manners of his London cousins, whom he had so lately left in Finsbury Square.

But the lady, on the other hand, in so far as the dry incrustations of a kindly heart could be

rendered permeable to the enfeebled promptings within it, which at best were but ill calculated to be addressèd to juvenile sympathies, at once showed a liking for the boy ; and as her eyes dwelt with an air of abstraction upon his youthful form, her mind insensibly seemed to wander back, till it lost itself in the mazes of early dreams.

His features were smooth and regular, and set off by a lively expression, and good complexion. His hair was light, and slightly curled ; and his eyes were blue, mild, and indicative of great intelligence. He was dressed in a neat blue jacket, vest and trousers of the same ; and wore an Oriental cap, which was soon changed for the Glengarry.

His journeyings for the present being at an end, he soon, (ciceroned by the butler) proceeded to familiarise himself with the common scenes and notable places in the neighbourhood.

## CHAPTER III.

## MISS MURRAY HOLDS A CONSULTATION.

A FEW days of refreshing rest, under the fostering care of his zealous aunt, speedily removed from our little traveller all the tiny effects of his recent journey ; and discovering, through his quick perceptions, that he was an object not only of general favour, but of watchfulness and study by the whole household, he soon began to reconcile himself to the domestic oddities and eccentricities of his new home,—although naturally some time must elapse before his dainty tastes could altogether assimilate with the rougher elements around him. Upon this point, from the

commencement of the project, Miss Murray herself had hitherto experienced some silent misgivings ; but the reiterated assurances she had received from the butler, in answer to her daily inquiries, that the “ young master was taking kindly on to the place,” removed her fears, and were to her a source of unfeigned pleasure.

Finding matters progressing in this manner, the lady next resolved upon holding a chamber-council with her prime minister, the butler, concerning the further career of her new charge.

“ Saunders,” she said, addressing him with a solemnity of air, “ you cannot be insensible to the grave responsibility now devolving upon me in thus undertaking the rearing and education of this youth, a Christian duty which heretofore Providence has not demanded at my hands ; consequently, in many things appertaining thereunto, I am altogether without experience, and therefore in some of these will require your aid. With respect to his education, our minister is the most competent person to afford advice. But,

as we all know, there are other accomplishments, besides scholastic attainments, which a gentleman of rank and fortune must acquire, in order to fit him in every position of life for the society of his peers. Amongst these, I presume, hunting, fishing, and shooting, will take a prominent place. But these are beyond my present purpose. To me, his father has expressed a most earnest desire that, in order to strengthen his constitution, and enable him as he grows up, to take part in those manly games and country sports, for which, as he phrases it, Scotland has ever been celebrated, he must be early initiated and instructed therein. He, moreover, wishes him to be taught swimming (which I think very dangerous), and, in his youth, to be well exercised in walking, riding, running, and ascending and descending these steep mountains,—strange fancy! which, he avers, will invigorate his limbs, strengthen his lungs, and foster courage in his mind. Now, Saunders (for upon this point I have no one else to consult), I wish to



know how far personally you can undertake to instruct and exercise him in these things."

"Is it your pleasure, Miss Murray," said the attentive listener, with a look of embarrassment, "to know how far I can undertake to run, like a proper trainer, and give Master Lorry a daily winding up and down the mountains?"

"Foolish man!" interrupted the lady. "No such thing; I merely wished to learn if you can undertake their direction. In your early life, and before you entered your present service, you lived, as you informed me, with a great sporting character, and used, if my memory is correct, to assist and accompany the younger branches of his family in their juvenile games and exercises."

"I did, Miss Murray."

"With your former knowledge and experience in these matters, do you, then, think you could engage to oversee and direct such exercises and out-door amusement as are common to boys of his age?"

“Freely and willingly.”

“Under these circumstances, then, I will confide to you this part of my duty ; and, as I have no knowledge in such matters, I must trust to you to think over and let me know by to-morrow what means, in the form of articles for this end—toys he will not want—I will require to provide for him ; and see that nothing be omitted that may contribute to his health and happiness.”

As the lady finished these remarks, the worthy servant, who had grown grey in her service, though not yet so much advanced in years as to have altogether outlived some bodily activity, returned his august mistress a very significant acknowledgment of the compliment thus paid to him.

“Miss Murray”—she preferred this form of address to madam—answered the butler, in return, very much elated in countenance, “it shall be my endeavour to carry out your commands to the utmost of my power ” (he spoke better English than most of his class). “But there are some

other things, besides what ye have mentioned, that the young master must learn."

"No doubt of that, Saunders; but what do you refer to?" enquired the lady.

"He must be taught dancing—taught the Highland-fling, and the Reel-o'-Tulloch; as to anything else, barrin' a Strathspey or the sword-dance, they are fit only for Lowland shanks, and the soft-soled loons ayont the Tweed."

Miss Murray smiled.

"Then, Saunders," she said, "I presume you consider it a part of your duty to teach your pupil these northern accomplishments."

The old man blushed.

"I cannot now undertake that," he replied, "but I've seen the day when I could hae done it brawly. Still, Master Loñry must learn them, or he'll never be thought worthy to wear the family kilt."

"In that case, then, we must provide for him a proper master."

With these words the conference ended, and on

the following day a small scroll was presented to the lady, containing a list of articles, which he had noted down in accordance with the aforementioned request, and in which appeared, amongst the several items, a bow and arrows, a small fishing-rod, a foot-ball, and a Shetland pony—the said list comprehending, in Mr. Saunder's opinion, the first instalment of his pupil's requirements. Within the few following days a new pony was in the stable, and a bow, with a sheaf of arrows, were seen in the hall.

Thus far had measures been carried and provision accorded for the exercise and amusement of the little stranger. With a full appreciation of her position, Miss Murray next directed her attention to the important consideration of his education, and in pursuance of this object addressed a letter to the clergyman of the parish, requesting of the reverend gentleman the favour of an early call to deliberate with her concerning the best mode of obtaining a competent tutor. With an alacrity unexampled in the history of

her sombre establishment, the epistle was duly despatched to its destination and was speedily responded to. Upon the following day a consultation took place, which resulted in the recommendation and subsequent election of an unordained gentleman, qualified for holy orders, whose installation immediately followed.

Had experience afforded, Master Lorry might now have likened his new position to that of a foreign captive in a Highland fortlet, whose every movement was placed under the surveillance of indulgent keepers. He was soon, however, enabled to comprehend the full value of these measures ; and to feel their object to be rather to direct his actions than coerce his will. Still, between his two instructors, he felt a daily demand upon his hours, such as he had never before experienced. Nevertheless, he did not shrink from his several tasks, but went bravely to work. His tutor was a good scholar, as the phrase in Scotland goes, of kindly manners and amiable disposition, and possessed,

moreover, the practical wisdom of knowing that it was better to entice onward than press the young mind in academical walks. He therefore commenced and conducted the progress of his pupil by easy stages, often turning an indulgent eye upon the greater monopoly of his time by his rival instructor, the butler.

The return of the old servant to the games of his earlier years was to him, in effect, like the renewal of his youth, and after the expiration of a few days "on drill," by his own averment, he felt himself a "different man upon his legs." He played—though it must be understood in a qualified sense—a daily round of foot-ball with his pupil, taught him how to strike the ball with his left as with his right foot, how to bend his bow, to balance the arrow, and give to it the due elevation according to the respective distances from the target. But the worthy man was not long left to bear alone the whole burthen of these toils. So soon as the arrival of the little stranger had been made known to the neighbourhood, an



esteemed friend, of the name of Colonel Keith, accompanied by a beautiful little daughter, drove over in an open carriage to the Crypt, to pay an early visit to Miss Murray and the little stranger, and finding the butler engaged, as we have seen, with his charge, he kindly proffered his services to assist the lady with her *protégé* in every way his experience and her wishes could suggest. Himself a passionate sportsman and angler, he undertook in due course to initiate the young gentleman into the mysteries of these crafts; but first of all to instruct him in riding and the management of his pony.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE KYMES AND THE CRYPT.

AT about the distance of two miles from Comyn Crypt, topping a slight elevation in the same romantic glen, and situated upon the brink of a beautiful mountain stream, stands the family residence of Colonel Alexander Keith, called the Kymes. It is a modern mansion, which, in the time of the present occupant's father, had been re-built upon the foundation of an old castellated structure. It is sheltered from the north by partially wooded and heather-clad hills, which slope upwards to a great height, terminating in jagged and fantastic peaks. In front there is an open

stretch of moorland, but in its immediate vicinity the grounds are laid down under a coat of rich verdure, here and there ornamented with old timber and belts of thriving plantations.

Unlike the Montagues and the Capulets, the heads of these houses—namely, the Crypt and the Kymes—had long maintained a sort of traditional friendship for each other ; these friendly relations being probably strengthened by the absence in the neighbourhood of any other resident gentry.

Colonel Alex. Keith was descended from an ancient Scottish family, whose forefathers had always been distinguished for their loyalty and patriotism. In his earlier years he had devoted himself to the profession of arms, but had now retired from the service of his sovereign to reside upon his property, carrying with him the friendship and esteem of all with whom he had served. He was of a generous and sociable disposition, and in his retirement took some pride in maintaining the old Highland hospitality, with many of the ancient and generous customs of his coun-

trymen. He had married the daughter of a rich Glasgow merchant, who carried with her to her mountain home a substantial dowry. Though reared and educated in the position of a lady, Mrs. Keith was alleged to be deficient in some of those exalted attributes now required to maintain her rank amongst the old aristocratic families of the country. In their union this couple, moreover, had been unfortunate with their children. Within the first six years of their married life they had lost a daughter and an only son, and at the date of our narrative, had but a second daughter left to console them. With the loss of the son or, finally, a male heir, the paternal estates passed into the possession of a lateral branch of the family; and this circumstance, weighing in a measure upon their minds, did not tend to mitigate their sorrow. Subsequently, however, and when the surviving child was in her sixth or seventh year, she had the happiness to be presented with a little sister, who received the name of Grizell, the name of the elder being Agnes.

Master Larry had a pecnliar taste and aptitude for all kinds of games and out-door diversions.

In India, from being a favourite with most of the sporting officers who visited his father's house, whom, though then an infant, he frequently accompanied in their pastimes, he had acquired a sort of precocious knowledge, especially of the technicalities of many of them.

Of this knowledge, small as it was, he now made frequent use, to the astonishment not only of his aunt but his preceptors at the Crypt; and whatever may have been the amount of his progress in Eton grammar and Cornelius Nepos—and the report was not unfavourable—certain it was, that ere twelve months had passed over, he was found in a fair way for attaining distinction in the art of climbing trees, ascending precipices, bird-nesting, jumping, running, and the like. Already he could boast of having twice on foot “wiped” the wind out of a fat lazy old pony, with the butler on it's back, after a race of half a mile; and he had now on his “list of en-

gagements" another "go" for a "spin" of two hundred yards with his erudite tutor, to whom he had had the temerity to give the challenge. But this interesting event—to the vast disappointment of his trainer (the butler), who, on the sly, had bet heavily on the "young-un," that is to say, to the extent of twelve old ringed pennies, —was destined for a failure.

When the conditions of the race came on for deliberation, the little fellow could not accept them, and resolutely "declared off." They were one-sided, he averred, unsportsmanlike, and altogether beyond the pale of the Jockey Club. He was willing, he said, to drop the point of weight for age on the part of the tutor—willing to run him fair, on the level, up-hill, or down-hill, for equal stakes; but otherwise he declined to "shake his pins."

Without prejudice to the case, we confess that on review, to say the least of it, the terms appeared to be rather hard, and savouring somewhat of the "birch."



They were to the effect that, if the pupil became the winner, he should receive a new copy of "Paradise Regained;" but, if the fortunes of the day went against him, then, as the price of his temerity, he should commit to memory, within three days of the race, two hundred and fifty lines of the first book of "Paradise Lost," or the whole of the Hundred and nineteenth Psalm.

The remarkable activity, the amiable disposition, and manly pluck of the boy soon recommended him in an especial manner to the esteem of Colonel Keith.

As the youth advanced, this gentleman in his daily rides not unfrequently called at the Crypt, after the morning lessons were over, and desired of Miss Murray that he should be allowed to accompany him, for the purpose of receiving some instructions in riding, and even went so far as to occasionally interpose on his behalf for a holiday.

Whereupon, he taught him the distinction

between the military and hunting seats in the saddle.

And when his eldest daughter was in her seventh or eighth year, she joined them on their rides upon a steady sheltie; and during these expeditions, he used to teach him, with all the punctilio of a Court Cavalier, how to raise a lady to her saddle, how to receive her from it, and how to deport himself by her side.

He also taught him the several divisions of the broad-sword exercise; and such was his progress “in arms,” together with a confidence in his skill, that, like Norval in the play, he “longed” for an opportunity to make trial of it in earnest—“with sticks.”

Expressing himself to this effect upon an occasion, when out riding with the Colonel in the neighbourhood of the Kymes, he chanced to see a man at a short distance off, walking in a field with a staff in his hand, whereupon he immediately sought permission to proceed to challenge him.

The permission was granted, and forward rode the youth.

“Hallo ! good fellow,” he said, “I have come to challenge you to a combat with sticks,” carrying his own (somewhat stout for his age) in true order for going in to action.

“I should prefer, Master Lorry,” replied the man, turning his broad round face upon him, “a trial wi’ our nivs (fists), for the knuckles dinna hurt sae sair as the sticks.”

The boy, sadly disappointed, wheeled instantly round, and rode back.

“What !” exclaimed the Colonel, with an assumed gravity, “shall it be said that my young lieutenant has turned his back upon his foe without even crossing swords with him ?”

“Oh, Colonel, I beg your pardon,” answered the boy, “it’s one of our allies, your young gardener ; and I should not have liked to disable him, and deprive you of his services.”

At this heroic essay, Colonel Keith, who all the while knew full well who the party was, looked

on in a paroxysm of constrained laughter; but consoled his disappointed lieutenant by pronouncing it an exploit worthy the knight of La Mancha, from which he had retreated with untarnished honour.

Within the distance of five miles from the Kymes, Colonel Keith had a kinsman, named Ranold, then residing upon his extensive property, called Cranmore.

This gentleman was accounted one of the most general sportsmen of his time. He was a famous shot and deer-stalker, possessed the best deer-hounds, otter-hounds, and terriers within his county; and, while he pursued his various sports over mountains, lakes, and rivers, he also carried hunting into the skies. Amongst the few lingering remnants—occasionally yet met with even in England—of the once universal sport of hawking, Mr. Ranold, in his love and reverence for the ancient pastime, included in his establishment a small flight of hawks, which he maintained and

commonly procured, by strict preservation, from a cliff upon his own estates.

A visit to this interesting establishment had for some time been promised to Master Lorry, and one day, in company with the Colonel, he set out for Cranmore. The youth was marvellously pleased with the sight of so many fine horses and sporting dogs, but what seemed the most to take his youthful fancy were the docile hawks. The birds, in their unique furniture of bells and jesses, were sitting in the open air upon a smooth lawn, leashed to their blocks; they were without their hoods, and their beautiful eyes, golden feet, and noble bearing, verifying their title to the "aristocracy of the skies," with their former claim to the rank and company of our nobility and gentry, excited his curiosity and admiration in no small degree. But the interest thus awakened was not to be limited to the mere sight of the birds only. He must needs know where such wonderful creatures were to be

found. This question, however, seemed to touch the gentleman's falconer—a canny Highlander—upon a sensitive point. It obviously referred to a secret and forbidden spot; and, with the freedom of a privileged servant, probably fearing that his master might make an imprudent disclosure, he took the liberty to step forward and make the reply.

“Petimes,” he said, “the eyesses pe kot on the Isle o’ Skye, where the olt purts preet, put the haggarts pe foont in Chermany an’ Norway, an’ come ow’r the sea in ships.”

“But are there none to be had nearer to home, master falconer?” enquired the other.

“Aye, I pelieve at the Pass Rock, if ye ken where that is, an’ on some cliffs in Panfshire.”

“Thank you, master falconer,” said the young interrogator, making an entry in his book.

During this conversation the two elder gentlemen looked on highly amused.

On their journey homewards, Master Lorry expressed to the Colonel an earnest desire to ob-



tain a falcon, and, much to his delight, he was informed by the gentleman that, when the breeding season came round, he would endeavour to put him in the way of gratifying his wish; and that, too, within a more convenient distance from the Crypt than any of the places referred to by the falconer, and still without trespassing upon the Cranmore preserves.

At the Crypt this visit to Cranmore became the subject of the whole evening's conversation.

Master Lorry recounted to his aunt all the marvels and incidents of his journey; told her of the fine dogs and ponies he had seen, and of the wonderful hunting hawks; also that he had been invited to again accompany the Colonel to see the birds flown at grouse upon the moors. To the butler he was still more communicative, but great was his juvenile wonder and joy when he found that the old man could not only tell him a vast deal about hawking, but was even able to conduct him to a rock where a pair of falcons hatched their young every year, and, moreover,

where permission to take the latter was in his own gift. But our sweetest roses are often surrounded by the most prickly thorns, and the worthy seneschal deemed it his duty to here apprise his sanguine listener of this proverbial fact. Sorry indeed was he to have to add that the eyrie was deemed beyond the reach of man, being beset by almost insurmountable obstacles. It was situated on an overhanging cliff of rocks, on the verge of an inland lake. From the bottom it was, therefore, inaccessible, and from the top, owing to a projection in the formation of the precipice, under which, within a small recess, the nest was placed, it became almost impossible to be reached by means of a rope. Many daring men had made the attempt, but only one had accomplished the feat and taken the young, and that was a professional climber for eggs and birds on the sea coast, and who, if even now to be found, was too much advanced in years to make a second trial.

So discouraging a report of the cliff might have been thought more than sufficient to crush the

hopes of any ordinary youth, but it was not so with Master Lorry.

“Then it is possible,” he said, “to reach the nest?”

“It has been done, Master Lorry, as I have said, but is not likely to be so again,” added the other, sorrowfully. “For besides these obstacles, and the cliff being frightful even to look over, the rock itself has an uncanny name, and most of the country folks will turn a mile out of their way, rather than venture near it.”

“What is this name?”

“The De’il’s Kirk.”

“How did it get such a strange name?”

“It’s a longish story, but, as you’re fond of queer tales, I’ll tell it to you.”

“Once a minister was crossing Grimstone Moor, about half a mile from these rocks, when he met with a reverend-looking stranger, dressed in black, with a white tie like himself.

“‘Good e’en t’ye, brother,’ said the minister.

“‘Good e’en,’ said the other. ‘Ye look a wee tired, neighbour.’

“‘I’ve been preaching this morning for Mr. Marvice, of the the parish o’ Bang-the-De’il,’ said the minister, ‘and I’m a wee o’er heavily clad on this warm day for my sharp walk.’

“‘I’m glad to hear that, brother,’ said the stranger, ‘for I’m just going to preach this evening in the open air, for Mr. Tickletext, down by’—here he pointed in the direction of the cliff, which the minister thought to mean a village lying directly some miles beyond it, where a new pastor had just been appointed—‘and these Highland winds are too strong for my constitution. Will you, then, oblige a brother, accustomed to a warm house, with the loan of your burdensome overcoat for the occasion? and I will engage to return it to the manse before to-morrow at noon.’

‘The minister, thinking the stranger had the advantage of him, and must have met him before, pulled off the coat, took his Bible from one pocket,

but forgot in the hurry his sermon in the other, and cordially handed it to him. But when the stranger stretched out his hands to receive it, he showed such long lean fingers, smelling of soot and brimstone, that the minister was amazed at them. The other lost not a moment, however, in pushing his arms into the sleeves of the coat, and thanking him for the obligation, marched off on long strides in the direction of the cliff. But, and what was more marvellous still, as the stranger walked on he gradually grew into three times his ordinary length, and so did the coat. The minister for a while could move neither hand nor foot for astonishment. At length, recovering himself, and suspecting who his professed brother was, he said a short prayer, and resolved to follow him and watch what he was after, for the minister was a good man, and feared neither de'il nor boggle.

“ Well, Master Lorry, when the other saw that the minister was following him, he made a jump right to the top of the cliff, and alighted down

within a small circular space or cell, quite hidden and walled round by the rocks, since called the De'il's Poopit. He then sat himself down upon a stone bench inside, and took out a white pocket handkerchief, wiped his face, made a low cough, and appeared to compose himself. When he had sat for a while he spread out something before him, which at first seemed to be the minister's forgotten sermon, but it was instantly, as was thought, changed into a pack of cards—the de'il's bible, as the country folks here call the cards. But the minister, in the meantime, had clambered up the rocks, and was keeping a sharp eye upon what was passing. He had got into a small nook, close by the other's elbow, but was hidden from view by a projecting stone, and could keek past the corner and see everything going on inside. When all this had been done, the stranger next arose, drew himself up to the height of a tall pine, then turned his face to the east, then to the south, then to the west, and lastly to the north—after the manner of the Pope of Rome, with

the host—and looked as if he were about to address a discourse to all the world. But when the minister saw this, and when the other's back was turned, he stretched out his arm and slipped his Bible on to the stone desk, and quickly drew back again into his nook. Now the effect of this, Master Lorry, was awful to witness, and none, I think, but a minister could have stood it. The moment the stranger saw the Bible before him, he gave a roar like thunder, snatched up his cards, but in the hurry left one under the book, then dashed right over the cliff into the deep water, and the japs (spray) rose three hundred feet into the air when he landed. But before he took the leap the minister made a grab at the skirts of his top coat, to recover it, but the cloak gave way by the force, and only a fragment remained in his hand, which he carried home along with the card. And when the good man got to his manse his piety would not allow him to take the unholy card into a Christian's house, so he placed it on a stone bench outside his door, and before noon



on the following day the borrowed coat, still wringing wet, and the piece out of it, was found upon the stone, and the card was gone."

"Now you see, Master Lorry," added Saunders, concluding the story, "you see, sir, the stranger was no minister of our Kirk, but the De'il in his likeness, which he often assumes, and although he could endure a bought or written sermon, which is the work of man, he fled before the Bible, which is the work of God. This, then, is why the cliff has a bad name, and is called the De'il's Kirk, and up to this day he is still thought to meditate evil there."

## CHAPTER V.

## THE HAWK'S NEST.

DURING the relation of this legend, effected in a tone of vast gravity, Master Lorry, with his head bent forwards upon the fire, continued a pensive listener. But it may indeed be questioned whether he would not have received the story with a greater relish had it referred to some other spot that did not lie between him and the object of his wishes. Clothed as it was, however, with its host of terrors and difficulties, he determined upon paying an early visit to the cliff; this the more earnestly because the breeding season of the year was fast approaching. He accordingly com-

municated the information to Colonel Keith, and one morning in the following month (May) it was resolved that that gentleman, the butler, and himself, should set out to reconnoitre the rocks.

The old servant was well acquainted with the locality, and at once pointed out the recess in which the birds had bred for years.

The Colonel speedily brought his glass to bear upon the spot, and therein discovered the female upon her nest, from which circumstance he inferred that the young, if such there were, could not be ready for removal for some days to come. He, therefore, instructed Saunders to appoint a man—naming one—who had some experience in the matter, to make an occasional journey to the cliff for the purpose of watching and reporting their progress, handing to him his telescope to be employed for this end. In the course of ten days a report was made that two young birds could be distinctly seen in the nest, and that within two or three days more they would be ready for taking, if such could be effected.

The Colonel now immediately sent for a party of men, one of whom had the reputation of being a courageous fellow, and accustomed to such bold exploits, and offered them a tempting reward to procure the young birds.

The men engaged themselves to make the trial, and an early day was fixed upon for all parties to be on the spot for the enterprise.

Most eagerly indeed did Master Lorry long for the approach of this day; but his patience was destined to meet with a further trial.

When the hour named had arrived, Colonel Keith, usually most punctual, was not up to time at the Crypt.

For upwards of an hour previously Donald (the pony) had stood saddled in the stable; but now its impatient rider was to be seen walking to and fro in front of the stables, with his watch alternately in his hand and pocket, as if he were taking note of each minute as it fled. In this state he continued for nearly half an hour beyond the time fixed upon, when his patience finally

came to an end. He then ordered out his pony, mounted it, and desiring the groom to accompany him, trotted off to meet the party at the cliff. Upon his arrival, he was not a little surprised and disappointed to find the men hesitating and whispering among themselves about the dangers and difficulties of the undertaking.

They were, however, allowed to continue their conversation for some time longer; still Colonel Keith did not appear.

At length, feeling assured that something had interfered with the gentleman's engagement, he desired the men to proceed.

Upon this the eyes of all the party turned upon an athletic young man—the same individual who had engaged himself to descend the precipice; but already he had surveyed it, and the first look from the top had greatly shaken his courage. In other words, he began to *funk*, as Master Lorry phrased it.

Still, he did not absolutely decline; and after a few words from the young commander, delicately

touching upon the virtue of courage, he began, though with manifest reluctance, to suffer himself to be invested within the coils of a rope. This was strong and massive, and was passed round each of his thighs, with a smaller one encompassing his waist, and attached to the other in front, to prevent him from overturning. A basket was next fastened to his back, for containing the spoil. Five strong men were then appointed to lower him down and otherwise work the rope—while a sixth was stationed at a considerable distance from the rest, on a projecting point of the land, to communicate signals between the parties operating, he being able, from his position, to see both at work.

All the necessary arrangements being thus completed, the climber now proceeded to the brink of the precipice, and commenced his descent; but a single glance at his countenance at this juncture clearly showed that if pride or shame did not impel him onward, moral courage would not sustain him.

Unhappily both failed, and he speedily desired to be drawn back, complaining of giddiness.

This failure, however, was fraught with less disappointment than might have been expected to our young hero, who seemed to have anticipated the result, and manifested no token of either sorrow or displeasure ; but stepping quietly forward, he said, in the most civil manner—

“Now, men, I will not desire any of you to descend the cliff, because, if an accident occurred I should never forgive myself. I am light, and not subject to giddiness ; and what I now request is, that you will put the ropes upon me, and lower me down.”

The men looked blank with astonishment, first turning their eyes on one another, then upon his slight figure.

“It is useless hesitating or refusing,” he continued, observing a slight disinclination ; “for, if you will not comply, I will find other men who will. The hawks I must have.”

“Well, my young master,” replied an old man



with a grey head, "since that is your will, I know by your eyes you will do it, if it can be done, and if your strength will uphold you—for it will require strength along with courage. But I wish," he added, casting a reproving glance at his comrades, "I were only young again, for your sake—then I should not now see the company put to shame, by suffering you to make such a venture."

"Oh, but then I should not have the glory and triumph of getting the birds myself," was the reply.

Advancing a few steps he now drew himself up with a countenance as blithe as if he were about to be measured for a new suit by his tailor, while the old man took hold of the rope, his hands trembling nervously by the operation, and began to bind it upon the courageous boy in the same manner it had been done upon the man. The basket was next attached, and, as a desirable precaution, some hay was placed in the crown of his cap, to break in a measure the force of any small stone

that might be displaced above him by the action of the rope. The old veteran then counselled him how to proceed—neither to look up nor down, but to keep his eyes steadily upon a level with his hands—how to make the signals to the man appointed to transmit them to the top of the cliff, when he could be no longer heard by those above.

These preliminaries being ended, Lorry, heavily loaded with ropes, now advanced to the verge of the cliff. In this movement the old man accompanied him, then bent himself down upon his knees, saw each man at his post, and, taking a strong grasp of the rope, gave the word “ready.” Away went the little fellow, the rope spinning slowly out after him. Down and down he continued steadily until he had descended to nearly ninety feet, when he suddenly came to a stop, and called to the men to draw him back. He had gone off the line to the nest, and required to be drawn up so far that he might be able to get round a peak of rock and descend on

the opposite side of it. This being achieved, "down, down," was again the call, and down and down he again went, until he was heard no more. About a hundred and eighty feet of the rope had now being paid out. The services of the signal-man were then called into requisition, and through him the men at the top were commanded to stop and "hold hard." Lorry was then some feet below the eyrie, but owing to the protrusion of the rocks above it, throwing the rope too much outwards, he found himself unable to reach the recess. Hanging now powerlessly in the air, and cut off from all auxiliary aid, he here found himself face to face with a difficulty for which, at first sight, he could conceive of no human remedy. In his chair of rope he sat motionless for some minutes, silently contemplating the scene. Tantalizingly before him, he saw the two young birds cowering in the remotest corner of the recess, with their beautiful eyes turned wonderingly upon him; but between them and their strange visitor lay an airy space of seven feet in width, which seemed

to be traversable only on wings. A net, with a pole attached thereto, might have bridged over the difficulty, but this he had not. Deliberating for a time, an expedient, the only possible one, occurred to him. Could he contrive to swing himself backwards and forwards, and thereby effect a landing upon the margin of the recess, he might yet achieve his purpose. The experiment was immediately made, and on his third essay he found he could touch the ledge with his feet, but, having nothing to hold on by, the force of the rope carried him instantly backwards. Still, the idea of returning without the prize, now crouching within a few arms' length of his reach, was a thought his heart could not brook. Again he deliberated, and it occurred to him that if he were to remove his boots his flexible toes would probably take a better hold of the rock. This thought gaining favour, he quietly pulled them off, placed them in the basket, and rested for a while, in order to bring all his strength into play. Again, the swinging motion was resumed ; several

failures followed. At length, after a desperate effort by a clasp of the toes, seconded by another with both hands, he resisted the backward swing of the rope, and made good a precarious hold, which, by twisting himself round, he improved into a secure landing. But now another difficulty interposed. The rope would not allow him to move from his present position ; several feet more were required to enable him to creep inward, and reach the nest. This was next signalled for ; it was speedily supplied, and in a few minutes more the eyrie was gained, and the prize, so dearly earned, was in his hands. With the birds in the basket, himself lodged in the crevice of this appalling cliff, the little hero now realised in his mind the perils of his situation ; but from these he turned away his eyes, and all dangers became lost in the delightful thought of the prize. He then put on his boots, took a fond leave of the eyrie, slipped from the ledge, and gave the signal for his upward course.

At this crisis of the adventure, Colonel Keith

came cantering up to the top of the cliff. He saw Master Lorry's pony in the hands of his attendant, but looked in vain for the young rider. We shall here allow the reader to imagine for himself the deep sense of horror and alarm that flashed across this gentleman's mind when he received the significant answer to this question of "Where was Mr. Lorry?" But he spoke not a second word. It was too awful a time to distract attention. The men were all mute, and straining steadily at the rope. He looked on in silence, perceiving that the party were fully equal to their task, and did not require his aid. At length, by a motion from the signal-man, he saw the rope begin to move slowly upwards; gradually it increased and began to coil more rapidly up in their rear. By and bye he heard a faint voice, as if sounding deeply down in the earth beneath his feet—"quicker," was the articulation. Still all remained silent, the men toiling breathlessly at their posts. Up and up, and faster and still

faster, the rope came, till at length the head of the little hero appeared in view.

“Oh, Colonel!” he exclaimed, as he caught a glimpse of that gentleman, “I am glad you are in at the death—I mean at the winning!”

Colonel Keith dared not reply, but the moment the other had arrived on the top of the precipice, he seized him by the hand and held it fast, as if to make certain of its reality, while something like a tear glistened in his eye. He now saw that, with all the boy’s natural courage and apparent gaiety, he was faint and exhausted; and having previously requested that some spirits should be forwarded to the cliff, for the use of the men, he speedily applied a little to his lips.

From the continued strain upon their strength, and their overwhelming anxiety during these trying moments, there was at the conclusion, a sort of sickly languor upon the hearts of the men, which even the joy of the boy’s safe return, and the sight of the interesting birds, could not for a time remove. They were, however, liberally



supplied with spirits, as also bountifully rewarded for their toils by the colonel. But instead of bestowing two guineas upon the man who had engaged to descend the cliff, the gentleman said he would reserve the sum to procure a prize for the courageous hero, whose feat that day would henceforth remain unsurpassed among the chronicles of the parish.

“Colonel, five shillings extra for my squire, who buckled on my armour,” shouted Master Lorry, meaning the man with the grey head.

Thus happily terminated the daring exploit of the boy.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE HAWKS AND THEIR PROGRESS.

AT Comyn-Crypt the triumphant return of Colonel Keith and Master Lorry, with a groom bearing the spoil of the enterprise, produced something like a little sensation throughout that sombre establishment.

Miss Murray, always stiff and stately, whose highest temperature of hilarity seldom exceeded a decorous smile, forgot herself so far on the occasion as to drop her knitting-needles, in her haste to greet their arrival, and to see the interesting birds, which she very graciously pronounced to be “bonnie wee creatures.”

But the pleasure of the butler was manifested by tokens of unusual animation and surprise. Hitherto, from fear of disappointment, he had felt a disinclination to encourage the sanguine hopes of his young master, with respect to this nest, well knowing the frightful character of the cliff, and the difficulties to be encountered. He had moreover learnt, since the party had been engaged for the exploit, that much doubt was entertained whether any of the men would eventually find courage enough to venture over the rocks. In his earlier life the old servant had had some practical experience in similar expeditions, and could therefore estimate the difficulties with due weight.

But upon being informed by Colonel Keith by whom the undertaking had been accomplished, his grey hairs almost stood on end, and he looked pale and utterly incredulous.

The Colonel, however, beckoned him aside, and desired that, whatever might be his own sentiments in the matter, he should carefully abstain,

in the presence of his mistress, from showing unnecessary surprise, and to particularly avoid all allusion to those dangers, now happily past.

To Miss Murray, also, the gentleman engaged to break the matter, and smooth down the perils of the adventure.

The rearing and education of the birds became the next consideration. But this task was soon disposed of by the colonel's intercession with his sporting friend, Ranold, to whose care they were speedily confided.

They were male and female—falcon and tierce,—and were pronounced by the falconer to be fine eyesses.

A young man, the son of the gamekeeper, was now appointed to give his attendance on the falconer, and to receive such instructions as might enable him to undertake their management on their return to the Crypt.

During this educational course their youthful owner was also invited to make occasional visits to Cranmore, in order to become himself

properly initiated into the mysteries of the art. Nor did the latter undervalue this privilege, nor neglect so favourable an opportunity of acquiring a practical knowledge of this ancient and once essential accomplishment to a gentleman of rank.

He was first taught how to handle, to hood, to unleash and fly, to lure and to approach a hawk upon his game. And he soon showed a vast aptitude in mastering the technicalities of the craft, and was able to talk learnedly with the falconer of hoods, bells, rufter-hoods, jesses, leashes, creances, castings, rangle, mutes, tiring, coping, mewing, bathing, raking, carrying, mousing, stooping, hawks of the soar, hawks of the fist, &c., &c., in a manner that both surprised and puzzled his Gaelic instructor.

From Colonel Keith's library he had been supplied with most of the popular writings on the subject (from Latham down to Sebright); and it may be questioned whether Don Quixote, in his adoration of Amadis de Gaul, ever turned to this

master of chivalry with a keener zest, than did the young student to the obsolete pages of Latham.

At Comyn-Crypt there is now a gleam of bright sunshine lighting up the roof of the old rambling building; and in the front of the drawing-room there is a beautiful lawn, neatly cropped, and interspersed with flower-plots, aromatic shrubs, and rose-trees. On the parterre are placed two small wooden blocks, in the form of truncated cones; and upon these blocks sit two birds, with bells tinkling at their feet: they are the two hawks just returned from the completion of their education. At a little distance from these objects, with their eyes bent admiringly upon them, stand four persons. One of them is a tall, stately lady, with a large shawl spread over her shoulders, a parasol held over her head, and something like a flannel capulet tucked in at the angles of her face, as a provision against the east wind and tic-doloureux. In this august personage we behold Miss Murray. By her side, in courtly conversation, there is an elderly, aristocratic looking

gentleman, with a grey head, strong eyebrows, of a fresh complexion and robust form. This is Colonel Keith. At a few paces apart, with Master Lorry by her side, there is seen a slender girl, with a cluster of dark ringlets peering out from under her bonnet, and nestling coyly in her neck. This is Agnes Keith; and our youthful hero is now engaged in expounding to her the mysteries and charms of falconry, and endeavouring to impress upon her mind the desirability of her becoming able to carry a hawk upon her hand, as did the ladies of old.

“A falc’ner Henry is, when Emma hawks,  
With her of tiercels and of lures he talks.  
Upon her wrist the tow’ring merlin stands,  
Practised to rise and stoop at her commands,”

says Matthew Prior. The birds are to be flown on the following day, at the hour of two.

Upon a flat expanse of open dry moor, about two miles from the Crypt, there is now to be seen, in the prospect, a long-haired setter standing at full point. Three equestrian figures and one on



foot are drawn up at a short distance from the animal; they are Colonel Keith, his daughter Agnes, Master Lorry, and his falconer; and over their heads in the air there is a large bird soaring and sweeping round and round, making a soft tinkling sound in her course. The dog is pressed forward; up springs an old cock grouse; the falcon gets a bad start—she is “too wide and low”—and after a bold flight of nearly half a mile, he escapes into a thicket of rank gorse, and she returns to the party; is taken down by the lure, and receives her hood. The dog is still standing at point. The tiercel is next whistled off; he mounts to a higher pitch; a strong young grouse springs from the turf; the hawk descends like a fallen star; the game rebounds from the ground by the force of the stoop; the hawk is rewarded and re-hooded. Some birds of the same brood have been marked down. Following them up, the dog is again standing over them, and the falcon is again put on the wing. The game now lies hard and close, and the hawk, though still

flying low, now instinctively keeps a sharper eye upon the movements of the dog. Another bird is pressed up; off darts the falcon, and upon a determined flight, trusses (grapples) it in the air, carries it for a few paces, then lodges it on the ground. The party gallop forward; the quarry is taken from her; she is fed and hooded up for the day. The tiercel, by a dashing flight, takes his second bird. The colonel pronounces the sport admirable, and closes it by enjoining, as a rule, that no young hawks should be flown over a second time on the same day.

Under his able instructor, Colonel Keith, Master Lorry's progress in the various popular games and sports among the hills was so fully approved by that gentlemen that at the age of sixteen he pronounced his pupil an accomplished Highlander. But while, in accordance with his father's wishes, he was thus actively pursuing these out-door recreations, he did not suffer them to interfere with his more important studies at home. Here his application to book and general

advancement were such that, at the end of four years from his arrival in Scotland, he was prepared to enter the University of Edinburgh. There, as usual with Scotch students, he took the winter session and returned to the Highlands for the summer, where he could give his society to his aunt and indulge in the pleasures of rural life.

During these recesses he spent much of his time in the company of Colonel Keith, to whom he had become attached, almost as a son to his father; and this youthful affection was duly appreciated and amply rewarded by the other. Between Lorance and his two children there had also sprung up sentiments of brotherly and sisterly tenderness; but, singular as it must appear, in the face of all this, and though here in the position of an orphan, he never experienced from Mrs. Keith any token of maternal sympathy. All here was blank; and his lively instincts speedily discovered that for him in her bosom the well of generous springs in woman's nature had

never flowed, and inwardly his feelings irresistibly receded from her; for a heart like a dewless desert, barren of its flowers, has no attraction for the young or old. Nevertheless, towards her he was always most respectful and polite, yet commonly in return she would barely deign to notice his attentions. Of this cold and strange behaviour to the amiable boy, Colonel Keith was not insensible, nor did it escape the quick perceptions of the children; but the youth was of too generous a disposition to resent it, or to alter in any form his deportment to the wife of one for whom he had so much regard.

Unfortunately, with Colonel and Mrs. Keith there was little harmony in their tastes and dispositions; and although a domestic quarrel or family disquiet was a thing unknown under their roof, there was obviously between them the absence of that vitality of affection which fills a house with a wholesome odour, waits upon them in every stage of life, and throws a cheerful glow around the conjugal hearth. Mrs. Keith, like the

very few (happily) of her type, had married and could scarcely tell why, except that because other women married, or from an ambition to attain a higher rank in society. From love it could not be. To her love, as we understand it, was unknown; her blood was too languid, her sensibilities too lethargic for its subsistence, and she could not comprehend or participate in the riches of the human heart. She could not even love her own children, yet was inordinately jealous of their affection and partiality for their father, monstrously conceiving they had supplanted her in his breast; hence it came to pass that Master Lorry, from sharing the attentions and attachment of her husband, was regarded with similar sentiments of jealousy. But to resume progress.

Within half a Highland mile from the pleasant residence of this family, and close upon the brink of the Iris—so we will here write our stream—there stands a spreading oak, and under that oak let the reader cast a fanciful glance upon a group of youthful faces. Conspicuously in the

centre of this picture is to be discerned that of the subject of this narrative. His fishing rod is by his side, and he is spreading upon the green sward the contents of his creel of small fish to be inspected by Agnes Keith. She has counted them twice over to him, while her sister Grizzel—now become a romping child—is occupying herself by stringing together a basket full of wild daisies and buttercups. At a short distance apart, seated upon a grassy knoll, there is also to be observed a female attendant in charge of the juvenile ladies.

Lorance, now no longer the plump, round-faced little Lorry of former days, is fast shooting up into manhood; and Agnes, his first and present companion, somewhat in advance of her years, though considerably his younger, is following him steadily up in the race to maturity. He has spent three winters in Edinburgh, and expects to complete his academic course by a fourth. The young lady is sitting by his side. Agnes always

likes to be near Master Lorry, and yet she could no more tell you why than that mountains should produce heath and not clover. As they thus continue, Lorance's eyes are frequently turned upon her with something like an air of abstraction or pensiveness. As the young artist, who had hitherto regarded his subject as a sheer matter of course, but suddenly becomes awakened to a sense of the inimitable creation of the Raphael he has been copying, so does Lorance now see something in her form, and its budding beauty, its sweet growth and gentleness, which had never before occurred to him. The discovery awakens in his bosom a train of new sensations, opens to his heart the dawn of a new pleasure, and flashes with a glow over his senses like the sunbeams of a new morning of life to him. His aunt's house-keeper had been telling his fortune, and instructing him in the science of palmistry. Agnes's hand is now resting in his ; she wants him to experiment upon it. He blushes and she blushes, but they



are relieved from their embarrassment by the younger sister pausing over her flowers, and addressing him.

“Lorry, mamma says you are not our brother.”

“Mamma is joking, little Griz.”

“But she has told me that you have a mamma and papa far away from here, and you are soon going to leave us for them.”

“Don’t say that, dear Griz,” interposed the elder sister. “He is not going away for a long while, and then he is soon coming back again to the Crypt.”

“But, Lorry, when you are far away,” added the former child, “won’t you still be Aggie’s brother and mine? for we have no other brother.”

“Yes, Grizzy dear,” he replied, “for I have no other sisters, and if I had the choice of ten thousand I should not exchange you and Aggie for them all.”

Little Grizzel now rose and came tripping forward to him, bearing in her hand a garland of flowers.

“ Now, Lorry,” she said, “ Effie (the attendant) wants to dress me with my wreath, but I like you best to do it.”

“ Yes, Miss Griz,” answered Lorry, taking her by the two hands, “ and I’ll tell you why—because you always get a kiss from me into the bargain, for you look so pretty and like a little fairy.”

Abridging this juvenile dialogue—matter not always interesting to the matured reader—we again return to the Crypt.

“ Shall fortune, envious of their joy,  
Such tender hearts divide,  
And bear from hence the bleeding boy  
O’er oceans far and wide ?”

## CHAPTER VII.

## ARRIVAL OF IMPORTANT NEWS.

THE Indian Mail had recently arrived in England, and there was now a package of foreign letters upon the table in Lorange's room. They were chiefly from his father ; only one from his mother. Fever had broke out in Calcutta and had carried off his uncle.

Lorange was his appointed heir, but the young inheritor of his wealth saw in its promised enjoyment but a small equivalent for the loss of affection he had sustained. Nor had his mother—his fond and loving mother—escaped the malignant contagion. Her life had been despaired

of, but she was again pronounced out of danger. To their son the option was given to remain for the ensuing session at Edinburgh, or to start with an early ship to visit his parents, and administer in due time to the effects of his late uncle. He preferred the latter alternative.

Upon communicating these news to Miss Murray, the lady became deeply affected, and to the old butler the prospect of so suddenly losing his young master was no less a matter of unfeigned grief. Indeed his meditated departure seemed to fill the house with lamentation. A messenger was immediately despatched to the Kymes, and Colonel Keith received the intelligence with surprise and manifest emotion. Little Grizzel burst into tears, but the grief of Agnes took a different course. It carried her straight to her room, and there almost prostrated her slender frame.

Mrs. Keith merely asked what was the matter with Grizzel. But Grizzel had no answer to make. She wanted sympathy, and her young instincts told her where to seek it—on her father's

knee, in her only sister's arms. Sad, sad is it indeed when, at such a moment, the infant passes by its mother's chair, in search of this divine attribute.

From this hour there was a marked change in the atmosphere within and without the Kymes.

No longer were there to be seen the juvenile glee, the troling of hoops, or dancing of shuttle-cocks, that formerly gladdened the parterre.

A few brief days are passed over, and there have been hearts beating, tears shedding, and hands working at the Kymes.

At a short distance from the hall, in direct view of the windows, there is to be seen a small and very recent erection. It consists of strong wire network, and encloses a space of green sward, to the extent of several square yards.

Seated upon a chair within it, the eye now alights on a slender female figure. A parasol is held over her head; a book lies in her lap: it bears on its fly-leaf an inscription, and reads, "Lorance Langton, to Agnes Keith." But the face of

the possessor is not turned upon the volume. Agnes Keith, for she it is, has her eyes directed towards two other objects; they are the falcons on their blocks, from the Crypt; and she is gazing in wistful fondness upon the smaller bird—the tiercil. It was a parting gift from her dear Lorry.

He looks proudly up to his young mistress, and receives her caresses with fondness.

She now bends herself forward, and invites him to her. The length of the leash admits, and he springs to her gloved hand. She feeds him, then carries him over the ground—and the tinkle of his bells is sweet music to her ears.

“A tiercelet sat upon her fist,  
Held by a leash of silken twist.”

The clouds have again settled down upon Comyn-Crypt, and it is feared the east wind is not far off.

The young master has gone forth, and with him all the life and sunshine that had recently

dissipated its normal gloom. From Miss Murray, even down to the humblest dependent upon the estate, sorrow has been stamped on every countenance.

But nowhere has it been more visible than on that of the faithful Saunders.

True, behind him, Master Lorry had left a hope and promise of an early return; but they all well knew that, in traversing such a space of the earth's surface, there must occur many unforeseen events; that there was a host of treacherous fatalities slumbering under the surface of those deep broad waters to be passed over, which might interpose themselves between that promise and its fulfilment.

Still, the old man strove to soothe himself with the promise; and such was the magnanimity of Miss Murray on the occasion, that she commanded that his rooms should be kept duly aired,—that his books and papers should remain as he had left them on his table, that his bows and arrows should continue in the hall,—and that his pony



should be kept in the stable, groomed, exercised, and held in readiness at a moment's call.

To Colonel Keith, and his loving children, these spirited instructions afforded a most sincere and cheering pleasure.

On board of an imposing barque, proudly sailing under the name of "The City of London," there is now to be seen a youthful landsman, somewhat pensive in his looks, of genteel manners, and pacing to and fro the capacious decks.

The vessel has just left her port, and is under a crowd of sail.

The sea is smooth, but rippled by a curling breeze.

The captain, and other officers, show a marked attention to their young passenger. On board most of the India merchantmen the names of Robert and John Langton are well known; and here the son of the former had only to mention his parentage, to command the friendly offices of these gentlemen.

Steadily and stately the barque presses onward,

growing less and still less to the eye, as the space widens between her and the shore.

By and bye, the curls on the water give place to more boisterous waves, and their white crests are dashed into spray against the massive prow.

The rocking motion becomes too much for the unseasoned voyager, and he descends, though with evident reluctance, to his cabin.

Everybody knows, or at least can imagine, what commonly occurs at a meeting of two affectionate parents with an only child, who, in curly locks, had gone forth from their fond embraces in the arms of his nurse, and, after a series of years, comes tumbling unexpectedly in upon their quiet in the goodly stature of three-fourths a man. There is, upon first sight, a strangeness and incredulity mingling with their loving recollection, which no tongue can fully express, and which time only can remove. Such, then were the feelings and emotions that now greeted Lorance Langton on his father's hearth, upon his arrival in Calcutta.

Mrs. Langton, who, on her son's departure,

was rejoicing in all the fragrant bloom and comeliness of a youthful mother, now bore but too visibly on her person the blight of her recent illness; and her son was painfully struck on first perceiving her weak and emaciated condition.

His father he found in his ordinary state of health, but sadly depressed in mind by the loss of his brother, together with his wife's enfeebled condition.

It had been in contemplation to remove her for a time to some more healthy locality in the Presidency; and now it was speedily arranged, for this end, that her son should accompany her, which was accordingly carried into effect.

Ere now, familiarised, or naturalised, with the hardy invigorating elements of the north of Scotland, contrasting strangely with those by which he was at present surrounded—where even nature in her physical organisation seemed to have undergone a general transformation—Lorance at first felt considerably bewildered in his new situation. Accustomed to much bodily exercise,

young, strong, and energetic, he especially repined under the prevailing lassitude consequent on the climate.

For this state of things he, however, in the course of time, embraced the only remedy.

The prairies and jungles in the province, abounding with game, at once presented to him a field for excitement and enterprise ; and, in company with the British officers, and other residents of the district, he took part in most of the Eastern sports.

At a durbar, held by a native prince, he had the honour of being presented to a kinsman of the renowned Sirdar Luttah Singh, who was accounted a mighty Nimrod in his day, and maintained an establishment of great splendour. By report, this nawab kept over two hundred sporting vassals, and about one half of the number were falconers.

Lorance, from the taste and slight knowledge of falconry he had acquired in Scotland, was now curious to see this vast establishment, and espe-

cially to witness the eastern mode of management. With the furniture of the birds, the hoods especially, he was greatly taken, from their rich and elaborate ornamentation. In the field, the method in use differed materially from that adopted in the western world. Here he found that, instead of whistling the hawk off the fist, in the language of Othello, as at Cranmore and elsewhere, the Indian, taking the body of the bird within the palm of his right hand, flung it forward at the rising game, as if launching a spear from the shoulder, thus imparting, as alleged, an impetus to the flight. Still our Gaelic pupil held a decided preference for our old King Hal fashion in the west. But of the various native sports, that which astonished him most was a practice of taking a species of deer with trained eagles—birds similar to but smaller than our golden eagle. The eagle was carried into the field upon a short pole, supported at each end by a falconer, and when the game was started, the bird was unhooded, when it dashed

off in an straight line to the quarry, making directly for its head, and, fastening thereon, plucked the eyes from their sockets, and thus rendered it utterly helpless before its pursuers. Here he had also several opportunities of partaking in tiger-hunting, commonly performed upon elephants.

Lorance continued with his parents for a period of nearly three years, when the state of his mother's health induced his father to propose her return to England for a time, in company with their son, with the hope of a speedy restoration from her native air. The son, though lamenting the cause, was in nowise loth to accede to this measure. Arrangements were accordingly made for their embarkation, and after a protracted voyage, they one morning found their ship safely moored between the joyful banks of the Thames. From thence they proceeded direct to Tunbridge Wells, a town in which the lady had spent a portion of her early life, and where her only relations in England still resided.

Once again back to England, Lorance's thoughts travelled naturally northward; but he affectionately determined that no considerations of his own should tempt him from his mother's side, until her health was restored, if so it pleased Providence to will that consummation. He even resolved to forego the pleasure of holding any communication with the Highlands, or of making any announcement to his friends there of arrival in England, contenting himself with merely posting a letter to Miss Murray, and another to Colonel Keith, ostensibly written—indeed began—in India, in which no definite time was named for his return to Europe.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## AT TUNBRIDGE WELLS.

REPOSING under a reassuring sense of peace and safety in rural England, Mrs. Langton and her son experienced all those inward feelings of joy and gladness, which commonly stir in the bosom for days and even weeks after the close of a long and perilous voyage at sea. The prospect of again feeling her foot on her native soil, of hearing again the sweet bells of her parish church, and of shortly witnessing the crowds of bluff and ruddy faces which proclaim the shores of merry England, tended materially to sustain her strength throughout the wearisome passage.

By slow degrees the bracing air and salubrious springs of Tunbridge Wells began to operate favourably upon her health, and, after a time, she was enabled to gratify a desire of seeing her son mingling a little in English society, and sharing in the general amusements of this resort of fashion. Tunbridge Wells, in those days, with its old rival, Bath, occupied a different rank from the present, as a rendezvous for the London gentry, and although it might then not quite realise the panegyric of the poetaster.

“ Great Sam, with his satellite sages,  
Beau Brummel, the idol of swells,  
Wits and blues of all waters and ages,  
Imbibe at our Hippocrane Wells ;”

still it could boast of its season, its routs, and its masquerades with its contemporaries.

Upon an early occasion, when a public ball was given in the Assembly Rooms, Lorange, then an utter stranger, had the surprise to be accosted by a voice in the crowd. He looked round and discovered that the salutation was

from a person belonging to the north, whom he had casually seen on a visit to Colonel Keith. The individual had come to the Wells, in company with some relatives of Mr. Ranold, a sporting gentleman, already noticed in our pages. This unexpected recognition took our hero somewhat aback. He, however, responded to it politely, but with a marked reserve in his manner.

“Why, bless my stars!” observed the person, in exclamation, “you’ve grown quite a man, a giant by my side, since we met at the Kymes.”

“It is some years since that happened,” replied the other, dryly.

“Capital fellow, old Keith—sorry for his accident — a little proud and croppish, eh? Charming woman, Mrs. Keith—like her best. Devilish fine girl Aggie has grown—going to get spliced, I hear. Good spec for a poor wretch.”

The speaker (by name and courtesy Andrew Corby, Esq.) was, with a loose tongue, running

on in this manner, when the approach of another gentleman, laying a hand familiarly upon his shoulder, suddenly brought him to a pause, whereupon, turning sharply round, he added—

“My dear Lorry—excuse the old familiar name—allow me to introduce you to my esteemed friend, Sir Francis Heronshaw, a great favourite with our mutual friends at the Kymes, especially with the fair ones of that ilk,” and to his last words he appended a significant laugh.

Lorance, without rudeness having no option left, bowed, but with measured politeness. The coarse familiarity with which the speaker had made reference to Colonel Keith and his family, had alike shocked and disgusted him, independently of the unwarrantable liberty taken with himself.

“Mr. Langton, I am very happy to have an opportunity of making your acquaintance,” said the baronet, bowing graciously. “And yet your name sounds in my ears with the familiarity of an old friend’s; for I have so often heard such

respectful mention made of it at the Kymes, and, allow me to say with almost sisterly remembrance, by Colonel Keith's little daughter, Grizzel, that I scarcely feel we are now meeting for the first time."

"So much, sir, have you the advantage of me," replied Lorange, scarcely disguising the effects left by the remarks of the individual by whom he had been introduced, "for during my stay in the Highlands, and friendly intimacy with Colonel Keith's family, the name did not happen to be mentioned in my presence among those of that gentleman's visitors. Still, sir, I beg to assure you that I am very glad to meet any friends of Colonel Keith's."

In the baronet's manner there was nothing of that condescending or patronising air which is frequently assumed under similar circumstances by persons bearing "handles to their names." As he spoke, however, he kept his eyes steadily, but mildly, fixed upon his listener, and doubtlessly saw by the reserved, and almost repellent atti-

tude of Lorance, that he was not a person from whom empty titles were readily to command obsequious homage.

“Unquestionably,” replied Sir Frances, with a dignified acquiescence; “at that time I had not the honour of Colonel Keith’s friendship, which since it has been my good fortune to possess. Then, I was made acquainted with his sterling worth only through his esteemed relative, Mr. Ranold, of Cranmore, by whom, I believe, you were also a little known.”

At this juncture, Lorance was opportunely relieved from his unpleasant position. Mrs. Langton, with the fond eye of a mother, watching over every movement of her son, and reading in his countenance the sentiments of his mind, now advanced to his rescue.

“Lorance,” she said, taking his arm, “I want you to dance the next quadrille with a friend, and I have sought you out for the introduction.”

Whereupon the son, with an easy inclination of his head to the baronet, but without noticing

his companion turned round with his mother and glided into the crowd.

“Who are those gentlemen you were speaking with?” she enquired, when the two had come to a stand. “I thought they did not seem to you altogether welcome acquaintances.”

“They are not acquaintances, mother,” he replied; “but having seen one of them in the north some years ago, he recognised me, and introduced the other as a friend of Colonel Keith, whom you have heard me speak of; and the mode of salutation and introduction was not quite to my liking.”

He now, after the introduction to a partner for the dance, conducted his mother to a seat; but before one quadrille had commenced he found a few minutes for reflection upon what had dropped from the lips of the party he had left.

“Old Keith, indeed!” he ejaculated to himself—“proud and croppish! had the time and place but allowed I should have thrust these



words of slander again down the detractor's throat. An accident, too! What did that mean? Aggie, again! not Miss Keith; a name polluted by such low familiarity; a devilish fine girl—going to get spliced—a good spec, &c. What a profanation! Well, Mr. Andrew Corby, I have seen but little but had enough of you; still, I shall hold you my debtor for your conduct this night to the extent of a sound horse-whipping. All this coming, too, at a time when I was longing so much to learn of my friends! But to have asked of such a person a question concerning them had been a wrong done to them, likewise a humiliation to myself. And, Sir Francis Heronshaw, what shall I say of you?—a baronet, the companion of such a piece of gross vulgarity;—the old adage, *noscitur*, &c., eh? And you have the 'good fortune to possess Colonel Keith's friendship,' yet the 'esteemed friend' of his detractor. Yes, and I am still regarded by 'Colonel Keith's little daughter, Grizzel, with sisterly re-

membrance.' Not a word of Agnes, my earliest and riding companion of former days! she has forgotten me—hem!"

"Lorance, dear," interrupted Mrs. Langton, surprised at the abstracted manner of her son, and tapping him lightly on the shoulder, "don't you see the dance is up, and you are forgetting your partner."

He started as from a dream, made the due apologies, and joined in the dance. It was one of the best balls of the season, but he appeared nothing loth when the recent illness of his mother was advanced by that lady as an excuse for an early withdrawal; and long before the music had ceased to resound through the rooms, he had his head laid upon his pillow. On the following day a knock and ring were heard at the door of the house in which Mrs. Langton and her son had their suite of apartments.

"Two cards, ma'am," observed the maid who had answered the bell, presenting the same on a

silver salver; "and the gentlemen are waiting below."

"Inform Sir Francis Heronshaw and Mr. Corby," returned the lady, "that I am indisposed, and my son is occupied in his room."

The message was duly delivered, and the party left.

The health of Mrs. Langton continued to improve at the Wells, and when the slight fatigues of the ball had been removed, Lorance and his mother had a private conference of some length, when it was arranged that the two should proceed to London by post, for the purpose of returning a visit to his father's relations in Finsbury Square. Here the visitors were greeted with a hearty welcome, but while the young gentleman was no longer the little curly-haired Lorry of former years, saluted by a hurricane of rosy kisses, he found that the old and irresistible beau, Time, had been flirting so assiduously with his fair cousins, that he had diminished somehow the

bloomy charm of their lips. Nevertheless, he was not forgetful of their sweetness of yore, nor of the affectionate care the ladies had bestowed upon him. The hospitality and refined luxuries of this wealthy family were irresistible, and Mrs. Langton was pressed to make a home of their house for a term of at least some months' duration. Her acquiescence with this proposition was the more readily accorded, because it would enable her son, whom she knew was panting for a glimpse of bolder scenes, to avail himself of his liberty, which hitherto he had declined to embrace.

## CHAPTER IX.

## IN THE HIGHLANDS.

“ His hawk is tired of perch and hood,  
His idle pony loathes his food.”

PARODIED.

It was about the hour of ten on a calm and cloudless evening; the moon was bathing the earth in a flood of soft and dewy light; the distant sound of falling waters over a rocky precipice in a neighbouring stream was alone saluting the ear, when the drowsy repose of Comyn Crypt was suddenly broken by the baying of a large deerhound in the court-yard. He was a

patriarch among his tribe, and was retained as a faithful watch-dog. The challenge was immediately responded to by two small terriers within the hall. This commotion among the dogs, in such a sequestered abode, could scarcely fail to arouse the attention and curiosity of the inmates. Presently there was an active stir among the domestics. The butler, coachman, and groom proceeded directly to the outer yard and liberated the deerhound, then moved slowly out upon the lawn in front of the mansion. They listened and listened again; the dogs sniffed about, but nothing in scent or sight was discovered to account for the challenge. Still, the old animal did not appear satisfied, but at short intervals continued to bark, raising and pointing his head in a particular direction. His fitful manner induced the servants to persevere when at length the double tramp of horses' hoofs, accompanied by the duller sound of carriage-wheels, were distinctly heard in the long avenue leading to the house. "Who could be coming upon the

leddie at this unseasonable hour ?” was a very natural question by Mr. Saunders. True it was, he added, that for some days past, two ladies had been expected on a visit at the Crypt; but it seemed altogether unlikely that that they should choose such a time for their arrival. The discovery of the approaching vehicle was, however, soon reported to Miss Murray, who expressed an apprehension that some accident on the way had happened to her expected guests, by which they had become belated; but this, with every other futile conjecture, was speedily disposed of by the drawing up of a post-chaise in front of the hall. In a moment the hand of the butler was on the handle of the carriage-door, and by the next moment the eyes of the old man were gazing in wonder upon the figure of his “young master,” although not now as formerly seen, but with a goodly whisker on each cheek, and in the full stature of man. Miss Murray heard the involuntary exclamation of her servant, then the milder tones of her visitor, in which she at once



recognised, though somewhat altered, the joyful voice of her "dear Lorry."

This was now an occasion for the recital of past dreams. Miss Murray had had many, but so late as two nights ago, she had seen him in a vision on the back of his pony, when his legs almost reached to the ground. In the region of the marvellous, however, this was completely out-done and out-shone by a similar trick of the fancy passed upon the butler. Exactly two years, five months and three days since, at the hour of twelve at night—he was correct as to time, for he had just finished his first sleep, and had risen from his bed to look at his watch, and make a note of it—he saw Master Lorry on the back of an elephant in a rank jungle, with his knees puckered up to his chin, a spear raised in his right hand, and a huge tiger crouching in the long grass before him. Another from Mr. Saunders will suffice. Upon this occasion, also exactly at midnight (which, he explained to the housekeeper,

was noon-day “at th’ Ind’as”) he beheld his former pupil (in his training days) without his jacket, and pitted against a black prince, with only a feather on his head and a rag about his waist, who had challenged him to a race for a stocking-full of guineas—half-a-mile the “spin”—and Master Lorry made the running so fast that he licked the breath out of his royal highness before he got half the distance, and trotted in the winner, to the wonderment of a hundred thousand black faced, black-legged pagans, who had gone on purpose to see the Englishman beat. So much for the dreams at the Crypt: what they had been at the Kymes we know not.

Of our visitor’s reception, it will be enough to say that it was even more than could have been expected, time and circumstance considered, the pleasure afforded on the occasion being much enhanced by the surprise with which it was accompanied; only the stately old lady, in imprinting her lips upon his cheek, declared she would not forgive him if he came a second time without

previous announcement, giving it as her belief that old Earl—the sagacious watch-dog—would not have barked as he had done had this been the case, for he never barked at expected visitors.

Early on the following morning the worthy Saunders, still looking hale and hearty, was by the bed-side of his young master. On a small tray in his hands, he had a cup of stout coffee, flanked by a flask of brandy; the latter the same that had been provided for the visitors' departure, now some years since, but was forgotten at the sorrowful parting, and had been carefully preserved for his use on his return. Lorange, though he would willingly have declined both beverages, could not resist the old man's sincerity. In half-an-hour he was up, dressed, and out, renewing his acquaintance with the dogs, and stroking the sides of his old pony. Breakfast was served at the usual hour of nine, and after some conversation with his aunt, it was arranged that he and the butler should have a walk together over the grounds in the vicinity of the

house. He was secretly longing for this, as it would afford him an opportunity of sounding Saunders on some points, in connection with the family at the Kymes, in which he felt more interest than he wished to betray. By his aunt he had been told of a grievous accident that had happened to his dear old friend, Colonel Keith, which had compelled him to be removed to Edinburgh, and there placed under the care of the most eminent surgeons of our capital.

When the two had proceeded to a distance sufficiently remote from the house, Lorange introduced the subject.

“Can you tell me, Saunders,” he inquired, “why it is that Colonel Keith’s little daughters do not now come to see my aunt so frequently as they used to do?”

“Why,” answered the servant, with something like a significant shade on his countenance, “I suppose it’s because the young ladies—for they are not now little girls as when you left them, particularly Miss Agnes, who is now a

woman—have not the Colonel to accompany them.”

“But before his accident, did they not frequently pay her a visit without their father?”

“Yes, sir, frequently; twice or thrice a week; and when they didn’t come in the carriage they used to walk with the governess.”

“I suppose, then, the family is so deeply concerned about the state of the Colonel’s health that they wish to be as private as possible until his recovery,” added Lorance.

“Mrs. Keith,” returned Saunders, “sent a message to her door, to our coachman, about a fortnight ago, signifying as much, when he had been desired by Miss Murray to ride over to the Kymes, as he had often done, to enquire how the Colonel was.”

“Oh, that, then, accounts for it; but what did my aunt say to the message? a rather strange one, I own, to an old friend.”

“She thought it very strange, sir, and has never sent over to inquire since. But she thinks

it still stranger," he continued, "that the young ladies have not been to the Crypt for more than three weeks; for before that time, ever since their father's accident, ten weeks ago, they were often over, telling your aunt how the Colonel was, and asking when you were coming back."

"That is indeed singular, Saunders."

"Yes, sir," added the butler, with more animation in his tone, "and what I'm now going to say will make the matter appear stranger still. Mrs. Keith, instead of wishing to be more private—and your aunt knows it—has had a good deal of company of late; and there have been two gentlemen very much at the Kymes, sometimes staying for weeks at a time; and it is said by the servants that one of them is to marry Miss Agnes; and although the poor dear thing told the governess that she did not like him, still it is thought if her father does not get better, or come home soon, her mother will make her have him, for she herself likes him."

"Do you know the names of these gentlemen?" asked Lorange.

“One is a baronet, they say, sir, called Sir Francis Heronshaw ; and the other’s name is Mr. Corby. They are friends of the Cranmore family. It’s the baronet Mrs. Keith wants Miss Agnes to take.”

“Do you know if the gentlemen are at present at the Kymes?”

“I think they are not ; for about three weeks ago they were up in England, where one of them said, in a letter to Mrs. Keith, as I was told, that he saw you, Master Lorry, at a ball, and spoke to you likewise.”

“The gentleman wrote quite correctly, Saunders,” said Lorance. “Aye, and since the arrival of this letter at the Kymes, my aunt, it appears, has suffered an indignity at the instance of Mrs. Keith ; and with it all intercourse between the two families has, I fancy, been interdicted. Well, Saunders, this being so, how can you account for it? To Mrs. Keith’s mind, there must be something very dreadful in my return from India.”



“The only way, Master Lorry, that I can account for it, is this. Not very long ago, when speaking of this baronet, Miss Agnes told one of the maids, who again told it to her mistress, that she liked you better than him, or any other gentleman she had ever seen.”

“That was quite dreadful, Saunders, and it altogether accounts for what has happened, for I was never a favourite with Mrs Keith.”

“Nor anybody else at the Crypt, sir. Even to us servants the lady was barely civil; and this was the greater pity, because the Colonel and the young ladies were so kind, and always appeared so friendly and happy when they came over.”

“Well, now,” said Lorance, changing the subject, “how are the hawks? I have not forgotten, you see, the dear old birds, nor yet the black gentleman’s kirk, in which they were cradled.”

“And you, Master Lorry,” answered the other, gravely, “at the risk of your young life, went down the awful cliff and rocked the cradle for

them, while the boldest men in the parish grew pale when they looked over it. The hawks are alive and well, I believe, but fat and tired of idleness. Since the colonel left they have had no exercise, except what Miss Keith has given to the tiercel, by carrying it about on her wrist, with an occasional flight at the lure. The falcon is too heavy for her. Besides, Miss Grizzel claims it as her property and charge, until, as she says, her brother Lorry comes back to the Crypt."

"But what has become of young Steen, my former falconer? Colonel Keith took him into his service when I left, as assistant-groom, in order chiefly, I believe, that the birds should be properly attended to."

"He is still at the Kymes, sir; but since the Colonel went away, and these fine gentlemen came about the place, Mrs. Keith keeps him so busy, that he cannot get them seen to as he used."

"I am sorry to hear that, Saunders."

“So was I, when I heard it. I never go near the place, nor see the hawks now,” returned the old man, sorrowfully. “Often, before his accident, Colonel Keith had them sent over with Steen, or brought them himself, with the young ladies in the carriage, to show them to Miss Murray; for she likes much to see them, because you risked your life for them.”

“Well, at all events, Saunders, I shall see them, if they are still in being at the Kymes, and that on to-morrow, before sunset,” returned Lorance, with an air of mild determination in his look.

“If you see Steen or Kay, Master Lorry,” added the butler, “he will perhaps tell you more of the doings at the Kymes than I can do; and what is more, sir, both are quite in my confidence, and frequently come over of an evening and give me the news; and, except for them, now, since the young ladies have stopped coming, none of us would ever hear a word about the Colonel.”

With this the conversation ended, and the two sauntered on.

## CHAPTER X.

## A VISIT TO THE KYMES'.

ABOUT three o'clock on the day following the preceding conversation, Lorange Langton rode forth to pay his contemplated visit to the Kymes.

He was mounted upon one of the carriage-horses, a sort of supernumerary in the establishment,—very handsome, young, and well broke, which had been recently purchased, to supersede in harness an old mare, now in her twenty-third year, and about to be transferred to the pension-list.

Simple and common-place as this visit in itself did seem, yet on the present occasion it became

invested with something more than an ordinary amount of interest.

Even Miss Murray herself, jealous and proud of her family's honour and descent, but habitually uniform and imperturbable in her disposition, expressed some curiosity concerning the manner in which the young scion of her house would be received at the Kymes.

Nor was the worthy butler without his share of speculations.

But, in the mind of the visitor himself, there was something stirring, altogether apart from common curiosity—an indefinable something which he had never before experienced—a sensational or emotional tumult in his breast, for which sovereign reason could not account—of which his Shakespeare gave no example, and his Plato no solution.

“What!” said he, within himself, “have I not ere now experienced all the thrilling excitement of danger—had my nerves strained to their utmost tension, with the uplifted spear in my

hand, flanked by two others equally ready to deal the thrust against the vast tiger, stirring the tall reeds in the jungle, on his onward march to the deadly conflict? Have I not, when less strongly sinewed, and merely from juvenile ambition, with a boyish love, perhaps, for the attainment of the object, undergone the most overpowering train of sensations, and even horror, by a descent over an appalling cliff, with only a few lines of twisted cord between my life and annihilation? Truly so; but for all this there was to be found a palpable cause; for the present commotion in my bosom, my reason can discover none. Why, or wherefore, then, has all this come upon me? Whence has sprung up all this causeless hubbub of sensations, emotions, and the rest of it?" he again enquired of himself, with a laugh, and a stoical endeavour to turn the rebellious bosom into ridicule. "Let sages and metaphysicians, who dream and prate about tracing up occult causes from their plaguy effects settle this sort of nonsense. For my part, do my best, I can, conceive

of no more logical cause for or common sense in it than that I should become nervous when I see my shadow in that crystal pool before me. Yet, withal, I feel a confounded queerishness, somehow. Can it be that some malign influence, some bird of evil omen, is hovering near me—a raven, perhaps, ‘boding me no good,’ or, mayhap, a malevolent hag, in the form of a hare, about to cross my path from yonder thicket?”

Ruminating in this manner, upon a slow pace, he at length, by a sudden turn in the road, caught a glimpse of the mansion; and a shock instantly passed through his frame, as if his hand had touched the rod of a galvanic battery.

“Surely the animal has trod on the torpedo,” he again ejaculated, striving evidently to sustain his valorous resolution not to be nervous, “or is it that I have unconsciously checked him?” (he was then in the act of crossing a stream). “Ay, and there is once more the house, with its windows now all glittering cheerfully in the sun—no little figures at either, though, as I have seen, watching



me down the hill. And there is the pretty parterre, where I have so often planted and plucked the sweet flowers for my young adopted sisters, with the dear Colonel looking on. I wonder at this moment what they are really like, and what doing! And there is our delightful hazel bower; but it looks dull now, and uninviting. Yes, and yonder is the old oak, by the side of the crystal Iris, under whose leafy boughs I spread out my last creel of fish; and where sunny-haired little Grizzel sported on the grass with her daisy wreath. Yes! and where beautiful Agnes,—I do not think I ever noticed the fulness of her beauty till that day—held out her hand, with the glow upon it of a rose petal, that I should read to her her fortune. Artless, innocent child! little reckoned you of the peril. Had I been a Romeo, and you a Juliet of ripened years, what then had become of your young heart? and what had been my fond rendering? what an illusory dream had been thine! Since that hour I have wormed my way through many

a browned and musty tome, and traced stage by stage the progress and development of sundry of those secret laws of matter, and of mind, which have been revealed to the world—and by which men of science, through the medium of calculations, signs, and tokens, have been able to carry a limited knowledge into the realms of futurity. Still, with all this, and ten thousand times the amount of the world's wisdom at my command, were the little volume of your destiny now placed before me, how should I translate it, or tell the tale even of your lot at this hour? Chiromancy, thou art an impostor! Enough of mortal presumption. Still there is the dear old oak. No group of laughing faces there now. Under its circular shade there is a darker gloom than formerly. Yes, portentous vision! There, as with every other fond and familiar spot here of earlier days, all is changed, and my fancy seems to conjure up the tawny brows and naked arms of grim old beldames, lustily belabouring each other with broomsticks, tugging at each

other's hooked noses and matted locks in true grimalkin fury. Avaunt, ye hated intruders!"

The last sentence he uttered aloud, and, to his ineffable shame and confusion, on looking around, he discovered that the ejaculation was uttered within the hearing of a stranger. The individual had been screened from his view by means of a bushy tree, and when observed had his back turned towards him, so that his face was not seen. This incident, however, had at once the effect of bringing him speedily back to his senses.

"Well," he added, with a hearty laugh to himself, "I have been very ridiculous, and really cannot account for this folly. I must be possessed; for what on earth were it to me if all our witches, weirds, and other evil genii of fable-land were at this moment cutting their cantrips, dancing jigs, or flaying each other alive within these woods? Sufficient is it for me to see my own cue in the coming game of courtesy. Thanks to old Saunders, I am now master of my own position. I know the temper of the garrison I

am marching upon, and am prepared for every contingency." Whereupon he increased his pace, and by the lapse of five minutes more, he had his horse reined up in front of the hall-door.

The visitor did not require to dismount to ring the door-bell, nor had it been part of his tactics to leave his independent post on the saddle until he had first "sounded the fort." But his approach had been observed, and a footman—a stranger, for changes had taken place among the old servants—anticipating him, had opened the door, and, descending the steps, delivered a ready-cut message to the effect that his mistress was indisposed, and that the young ladies, with their governess, had gone out for a long drive.

Lorance presented his card, then turning his horse round, proceeded directly to the stables, with the topography of which he had of old been perfectly familiar. Here the first individual by whom he was observed was an old, faithful, and familiar stable servant of Colonel Keith, answering to the name of Richard Kay.

“Oh, Master Lorry, I am joyed, and yet sad i’ my heart to see ye,” said the groom, with a little of the privileged freedom of former days.

Lorance immediately alighted, and desired a shake of the old man’s hand, had his horse led into the stable, while he feelingly endeavoured to condole with him for the temporary loss of his master. He next inquired for Steen, his former falconer. He was still in the service of the family, but not at present on the premises. The groom, however possessed the key that opened the way to the falcons, the object of his present solicitation, to which he desired to be conducted. A few steps carried them thither, and as he stood over the birds, then sitting on their blocks, he seemed to contemplate them with singular emotion. What scenes had he passed through since he first saw their same beautiful eyes turned upon him, in the face of the frightful cliff. They did not now know his voice or his whistle, but looked restless at his approach, and instead of brown in their nestling plumage, as

when he had left them, they were now blue almost as wood pigeons. Their beaks were much elongated, and sadly in want of copping. Their jesses, too, were hard, worn, and in need of renewal. He remained with him for some minutes, and when he had withdrawn and signified his intention to remount his horse and proceed homewards, the old servant, with a look of unspeakable grief and surprise, exclaimed,

“But, Master Lorry, ye’ll surely no leave without seeing the young ladies?”

“They are out for a long drive,” returned Lorange, “and Mrs. Keith is not sufficiently well to receive me.”

“But Miss Grizzel isn’t gone; she is in the house, for—I may tell you, sir—she doesn’t like the gentleman that’s gone in the carriage wi’ Miss Keith and the governess; an’ if ye leave the Kymes without seein’ her, there’ll be two wet pillows afore the mornin’; and, Master Lorry, my own head will no lie the softer for it, for their distress is aye mine.”

“I hardly quite understand you, Kay,” said Lorance; “will you explain a little what you mean?”

“I must, then, divulge to ye a secret, Master Lorry, and I know well who I’m speaking to, or my mouth would be sealed,” added the groom, with a look of extreme gravity. “I am the only one about this place whom the sweet young ladies make a confidant of; and I ken their sentiments about you, and about somebody else, as well, I think, as they do themsel’s. And this I tell ye, Master Lorry, if ye go home to the Crypt this day without seeing them, or Miss Grizzel at least, she will go out of her reason afore the mornin’.”

“You surprise and perplex me greatly, Kay.”

“I know I do, sir; but I must tell you. Both Miss Agnes and Grizzel ken you’re here. You were seen from a distance coming, as I’ve heard, afore I saw you, Master Lorry; an’ it’s my belief the carriage was hurried away from the side door, that you should not see Miss Agnes. Miss Grizzel wouldn’t go.”



“But, gracious me ! why should Miss Keith be hurried away because I was seen on my way to pay a visit? or, in the name of heaven ! can you tell me what has occurred that I should not be allowed to see the daughters of Colonel Keith as formerly?”

“I can and will answer that in a word, Master Lorry,” said Kay; “it’s because Mrs. Keith likes another visitor better than you, and because Miss Agnes likes you better than the other visitor, although the young dear lady has no thought to be in love or marry anybody, as she has told me, with tears in her eyes.”

“Nor have I ever dreamt of such a thing myself, Kay,” returned Lorance, “and no one of Colonel Keith’s family has had any grounds for supposing that, at my age, I could entertain other motives towards any member of it than those of the sincerest friendship, or brotherly affection for the children.”

“But Mrs. Keith is a strange woman, sir, and was never very fond of any of the Colonel’s

friends," added Kay, in a subdued tone, "and she may have some fears of your presence here hindering Miss Agnes from marrying the titled gentleman she wishes her to have."

Lorance bit his lip.

"Well, Kay," he said, with a flash in his eye, "if Mrs. Keith has such a dread of me—if she fears that I may prove an obstacle to a heartless scheme of compelling her daughter to marry against her will, and that, too, a man whom she does not love, by heaven! I tell you, I will give her cause to dread me. But how has all this come to pass? Why has there not been communication of it made to her father, who, I am certain, would never suffer such a cruelty to be perpetrated upon his loving daughter?"

"The Colonel, sir, is afflicted in the brain by the fall, and is insensible, and not allowed to have communication with anybody, or to see any one but the doctor. So Miss Agnes told me herself, and it is that it makes her so frightened now."

“ You amaze and appal me, Kay.”

“ Oh! Master Lorry,” resumed the groom, with undisguised emotion, “ had ye but seen the two young ladies the other afternoon standing on my cottage floor, covered in tears and beseeching me for help and counsel—help from an old worn-out servant—wi’ Bauby (his wife) nearly as bad, ye’re heart would hae failed ye, I’m sure on’t. There was little Grizzel clasping the hand of her distressed sister, and striving to comfort her, like an old woman; and what d’ye think the sweet thing said, sir?—‘ Now, dear old Kay, won’t you strive to help us, when our father cannot come to us? for you are the only true friend we have left now. Oh! if our brother Lorry—for they always call you so—would but only come back to the Crypt, then wouldn’t he help us, and save my sister;’ she said that, sir, and much more.”

“ But what had then occurred to cause them so much distress ?”

“ Something at the house displeasing to Miss Agnes,” answered Kay. “ Now, Master Lorry,

ye see what a pass things hae come to at the Kymes; and if ye leave to-day without seeing Miss Grizzel, I'm sure she'll break her heart."

"But what can I do? I have no option left me," said Lorance, with a perplexed look. "I am declined admittance into the house to see her; and my position cannot permit me to loiter about the premises, like a thief, to lie in wait for her."

Kay immediately saw the force of this argument, and, having received a return-present for his wife, brought out the horse, and the visitor rode slowly off. When he had entered the avenue of trees and was sufficiently advanced to be beyond the view of the house windows, his ears suddenly caught the sound of light footsteps upon a rapid pace behind him. He looked round and beheld a beautiful girl, of about the age of eight or nine years, hastening to overtake him; she was dressed in white, and had a cluster of dark ringlets floating airily about her shoulders. Upon observing the horseman draw up, she evinced something like timidity or hesitation in her

resolution to approach. Lorance eyed her with peculiar interest, and readily recognised her features while yet at a small distance.

“Are you, sir, Mr. Lorance Langton?” she enquired, in a half-breathless state, blushing with the sweetness of a new-born rose.

“Not to you, my darling little sister Grizzel,” he replied, springing from his saddle.

“Yes, yes ; it’s my brother Lorry,” and by the next moment she was locked in his arms.

Oh ! Nature, thou art a guileless, faithful sister, mother, or step-dame, whensoever thou art pleased to doff the world’s mask ! How canst thou over-leap barriers, sever chains, and laugh at despots !

For some seconds neither of the two could utter a syllable ; tears and sobs alone found vent with little Grizzel.

At length, fearing that Lorance had observed them, she said,

“Now, dear Lorry—our dear Lorry still—you are not angry because I have cried a little—it’s for joy and not sorrow, And, Oh ! when I tell my sister Aggie, when she comes home, that I have

seen you, I think I shall cry again with joy, and so will she."

This interview was extremely brief. Lorance asked but few questions; and rightly adjudging the meeting to be against the decrees of the house, unreasonable and unnatural as these might be, he resolved to shorten its length, lest it might, if discovered, bring maternal anger upon the tender transgressor.

It was not, however, unseen by another party. Two watchful eyes from a distance were bearing upon every footstep of the little airy creature; but they were the friendly eyes of the faithful Kay, whose stationary figure was visible at the extreme end of the avenue, whence the child had shot forth with the speed of a roe.

After commissioning Grizzel, as the bearer to Agnes of his brotherly affection and most tender remembrances of her earlier days, endorsing the same with a parting kiss, the visitor re-mounted his horse and proceeded homewards. His deliberations by the way were now graver, and less fanciful than upon the outset of his journey.

## CHAPTER XI.

SERIOUS PROSPECTS, EXCHANGE OF LETTERS, &c.

“MRS. KEITH is a strange woman,” said Miss Murray, raising her head with an air of meek and dignified equanimity, when Lorance had completed the account of his visit to her neighbour. “On the day of her first arrival at the Kymes, on which occasion I was present, she greatly shocked some of the Colonel’s friends by her bad taste and singular behaviour; nor, from what I had previously learned, am I now in the least surprised to hear that you were not to-day received as a welcome visitor; but I was unprepared for such a report as you have given me of her extra-



ordinary conduct towards her own children, more especially at a time when their father is believed to be lying on his death-bed."

"But, aunt, do you really believe that Colonel Keith is in such a dangerous state?" said Lorange, manifesting a sudden shock at the last sentence. "If so, I must go at once to Edinburgh and see him."

"Lorange, if it were to be of the least service either to the Colonel or to his dear children, I myself should not hesitate to undertake the journey, although I have not travelled half the distance from home for the last twenty years," returned the lady, with an expression of unwonted energy. "But such a journey by either of us would only be labour in vain. Some time ago, and when I could no longer have direct information from the Kymes, I wrote to a friend in Edinburgh, desiring him to visit Colonel Keith, in my name, as often as he could find it convenient, and report to me of his condition; but, although I have received frequent communications relating

to his health, the gentleman has never been permitted to see him ; nor have any of his own personal friends been allowed to enter his room."

The listener turned his eyes sorrowfully upon the ground.

"It is very bad to think of it," she continued, "for he has been such a good and worthy man, and the only kind counsellor and trusty friend I have had for years in this solitary neighbourhood."

Lorance now excused himself under the plea of having something to communicate to the butler regarding the falcons, of which he had spoken, and accordingly left the room.

This was, in truth, the case, but he further desired to give vent to his sorrow in private.

In due time, Saunders was found, to whom he again related the particulars of his day's ride, which afterwards formed the subject of further grave consideration between them.

About the dawn of the evening on the following day, agreeable to an appointment, Richard

Kay made a private visit to the Crypt. Lorance was at the time of his arrival in his own room, into which the visitor was straightway conducted by the confidential Saunders. Between the two neighbouring servants there had long subsisted a sort of brotherly regard, and as the business of the groom was a matter in which the butler was equally interested, the latter was invited to take part in the conference.

Lorance's visit to the Kymes, according to the information now received, had been productive of two significant effects. It had aroused the feeble energies of Mrs. Keith, and had made a stirring sensation throughout the household, which again had speedily extended itself not only to the dwellings of the neighbouring cottagers, but already over a considerable part of the surrounding parish, to the humble inhabitants of which, from his generous and affable disposition, his name had formerly been almost as familiar and beloved as that of Colonel Keith itself. Amongst the dependants upon the estate the lady had never

been popular, and her deportment during the absence of her husband, now more closely canvassed by the idle, had tended but little to abate their prejudices.

For several months prior to Lorance's arrival at the Crypt it had been currently reported that Miss Keith had become the affianced bride of a "titled gentleman," now almost a constant visitor at her father's house; and it had likewise been made known to them that the young lady herself had expressed a strong aversion to her suitor, and had vowed she would never marry him with her consent. They further knew that her early attachment to Lorance, though then only as a child and sister, was still very strong. All these circumstances, as will readily be conceived, now combined to invest this abrupt and unexpected visit with more than ordinary interest.

Amongst the several offendings of our hero on this untoward occasion, two of them require especial notice. The first was his having in-

curred the high displeasure of the august lady by loitering about the premises, instead of immediately departing, "as became a gentleman," on receiving his answer at the door. This offence, in the eyes of the lady, had become grievously aggravated by a subsequent discovery that the daring intruder must have found her guilty of a deliberate untruth, inasmuch as she had stated that her daughters were out with their governess "for a long drive," while at that moment one of them was sitting by her side in the drawing-room. A lie at all times is bad, but doubly sinful when detected. The stolen interview with Grizzel and Lorange in the avenue had also been discovered by a person appointed to keep an eye on his movements, and information thereof straightway conveyed to the lady. Nor had the distant figure of Richard Kay, who was alleged to have abbetted in the matter, escaped observation. Indeed the fealty of this old servant to his mistress, had not hitherto been altogether exempt from suspicion. Holding his commission direct from

Colonel Keith, from whom he had already a comfortable annuity settled upon him for life, he was accused by the lady of occasionally deporting himself towards her with too much independence. Further, from his known attachment to the young ladies, together with his partiality for one for whom she had an unnatural dislike, he now fell under suspicion of having connived at the meeting, and was at once subjected to a rigorous interrogation on the matter. During this ordeal, however, the old servant acquitted himself with much spirit, and left the lady as wise as when she commenced the parley.

The second charge against the offender was still more heinous. He had not only insulted and incensed the mistress of the Kymes in the highest degree, but it had wounded the pride and aroused the indignation of her two favoured guests, in a manner so awful and heroic, that nothing short of prompt and summary measures by them was deemed admissable in the case. Upon this announcement the reader will pro-

bably turn to us, as dutiful reporters, for some enlightenment on this grave charge. This will presently be supplied. When Richard Kay had delivered himself of so much of his news, he drew from his pocket a letter which he had received from a fellow servant named Steen, who had been instructed to be the bearer of it to its proper destination; but when the circumstance was communicated to the former, he engaged to relieve the other of his mission, as he intended himself to ride over to the Crypt. The contents of the letter were as follows, it was addressed "Lorance Langton, Esquire."

"The Kymes, &c.

"SIR,

"It is not without a sense of deep and painful regret that I now, on my own behalf, and at the call of Mrs. Keith, have to address to you the present communication. In thus undertaking the task, I may, then, in the first place,



inform you that I am at the Kymes, an *invited* guest, as a temporary stay and protector to that lady during the lamented absence of her husband, Colonel Keith. In this capacity I now address you, and in this capacity it devolves upon me to endeavour to secure to her that domestic repose and privacy which she seeks for herself and family, and which by every proper thinking person must be considered as a privilege sacred to her under her present privation and distress. It is, therefore, with profound grief that she has to charge a member of an old neighbouring family with being the first to violate that privilege—a member, too, who, at an earlier stage of his life, had liberally shared of the hospitality of her house. Presuming no doubt upon the lady's previous forbearance, when, as appears, your deportment at the Kymes was not always even then such as to merit her approval, you yesterday committed a trespass, aggravated by circumstances which she cannot overlook or suffer to

pass unrebuked. These I need not here enumerate, as they must be fresh in your recollection. But there is another act imputed to you, affecting myself and another friend of the family here, for whom I must demand an immediate explanation, and apology. This consists of an utterance not only of a gross untruth but of a direct insult alike to Mrs. Keith and her present guests, of which I am one. To refresh your memory here, need I say more than repeat your own words—  
'Avaunt ye hated intruders,' &c.

"Now, sir, that you uttered these unprovoked and slanderous words within the hearing of a gentleman, no less insulted by them than myself, is a fact that I am prepared to prove to your satisfaction. 'Hated' by you, through envy or, perhaps, jealousy I may be; but that I am an 'intruder' at the Kymes is an aspersion and a lie, which I now charge upon you to the teeth, and for which I demand that redress, under penalty of bodily chastisement, which every aggrieved gentleman under similar circumstances usually requires,

and has a right to expect from a person of honour.

“I am, sir, your obedient servant,

“FRANCIS HERONSHAW.”

Had either of the two great artists—the author of “Tobias and his Family,” or of “The Reading of the Will”—chanced to have been an eye-witness of this group of three persons now in the room during the perusal of this missive, he would indeed have found a subject well worthy of his famous brush. Side by side there were the two faces of the groom and butler, somewhat venerable by age, alike plump and round, and surmounted with grey locks, smoothed down and shiny, with their eyes intently fixed upon the countenance of the reader; while he, standing at full length, his features now expanding, now contracting, as surprise and suppressed mirth alternated with each other, continued to course over the lines in silence, occasionally pausing to make certain of the matter. Scarcely even a breath was

audible in the room until the task was completed, when suddenly a laugh broke from his lips, which utterly electrified his grave spectators.

“Saunders, Saunders!” he exclaimed, in a fit of frantic glee, “to the armoury! to the armoury, I say, with all speed! ’Tis a declaration of war—a summons to the field, smelling of bullets or horse-whips. See to your weapons, my trusty squire, for I must promote you to that post. Thanks to my provident guardians and expert teachers, I can split a lance or cross a spear—ay, and draw a bow after Hindoo fashion, or an Anglican tricker, with my neighbours; and as to horse-whips, you know the old adage—two can play with them. Ho, ho, my brave masters! and this is your game! Sir Francis Heronshaw of the heron’s nest, and Andrew Corby from a similar ‘airy hall,’ for ought I have learnt. Puissant knight and valorous henchman! Saunders, I say, I elect you my squire for this honourable company, this matchless tilt or tournament; and know, sir, you must choose the weapons. ’Tis a

right I hold from the challenger, and if our trusty squires, after Highland fashion, become envious of our merry sport and take to arms in the fray, I'll back you with a sheaf of arrows, or a leathern thong, to the tune of twenty rupees against he of the *corby's* nest. Heigho! my peerless masters, but we shall have valiant deeds on hand!"

Without a pause or momentary intermission, the speaker went on in this rhapsodic manner, again and again throwing affectively something of the stage rant into his words, while the countenance of his elected squire, blank and pale, looked as pregnant with valour as that of the renowned knight of Eastcheap memory, on the eve of battle, the astonished servant, at this juncture, being altogether unable to divine whether his young master was really in jest or in earnest, or had literally taken leave of his senses, he never before having seen him in a similar state of animation.

Lorance at length read the letter aloud, which,

like the will of Cæsar in the hands of Antony, told its own tale. Instead of pallor, there was now a flush of indignation upon the faces of both listeners, and Saunders shook his head ominously. Lorange, however, desired them to digest the matter together for the space of a few minutes, while he turned to a side-table and rapidly penned his reply. This done, on returning with his production folded up in his hand, the reading of which he intended to defer until he had heard their humble opinion of the former, he said, again resuming his theatrical humour.

“ Well, now, my friends, what think you of our cartel! Speaks it not of leaden bullets, leathern thongs, or crouching humility? Counsel ye for peace or war?”

“ Oh! Master Lorry,” exclaimed the butler, in a state of great perturbation, “ what a pass things have come to at the Kymes, and all for want of the good Colonel. Ah! were he but here again, he would soon hurry out that nest of cranes and corby-crows.”

“Ay,” added Kay, “and he would soon set the doos (the young ladies) again at their liberty, to rove about our bonnie glens.”

“Of that I think there can be little doubt,” said Lorance. “But you are both wide away from the business. What, I ask, is your opinion of the Kymes letter? And in return, what course would you recommend for my adoption? Shall I resent with becoming spirit this indignity done to myself and to my aunt, as her relation? Or shall I stain my family escutcheon, play the craven, and prostrate myself at the bidding of this presumptuous baronet, inflate his pride and vanity by apologising for offences I have not committed, and finally, in the beatitude of his arrogance, suffer him, an impudent adventurer at the Kymes, under favour, forsooth! of Mrs. Keith, to swagger and lord it over the old inhabitants of this parish—is this last alternative yours, my reverend seniors?”

“No, no, Master Lorry,” answered the two together, their eyes sparkling with fire, as the



young speaker stirred up the old embers of their Highland spirit.

“As soon,” added Saunders, “should I submit my body to be stuck as full of arrows as the pictures of St. Jerome, or, like the ghost of Montrose, have my spirit to wander to and fro without the head, amongst the hills, as allow any interloper of his sort to insult the house of my mistress. But, sir, you do not require counsel of us ; and I know what you will do, and what I will try my best to do likewise, if needs must be.”

“Bravo, Saunders,” ejaculated the other. “I knew you had yet the blood of the clans in your veins. I will now read to you my reply to the baronet’s missive, whereby you can judge the better of my intentions.”

He accordingly proceeded to do so.

“Comyn-Crypt.

“SIR,

“By a messenger from the Kymes, I have this day received a letter addressed to me,

bearing the signature of one Francis Heronshaw. To any personal knowledge of such an individual I must plead an entire ignorance, though, by the name, I am reminded of a person once obtruded upon my acquaintance—then graced with a nominal prefix—by a Mr. Corby. But, right or wrong in my conjecture of identity, my present office is simply to deal with the merits of the communication.

“First, then, to be brief, by the spirit and tone of its contents, it appears manifest that a means has been sought and found—for reasons which I will not here condescend to analyse—for fastening upon me a quarrel; by exaggerating and contorting the incidents of a friendly visit to an old neighbour into a series of misdemeanours, while this Francis Heronshaw, by his own avowal her ‘invited’ guest and elected ‘protector,’ starts to his feet, and, like a dutiful knight with her name upon his lips, heroically essays to redress some alleged wrongs thereby done to his mistress. Further, either fancying himself personally

aggrieved, or being wishful to get up a little sensational affair on his own account, to widen the sphere of his valorous actions and glory, he casts a 'lie' in my 'teeth,' flings down the gauntlet, and peremptorily demands that satisfaction which, by the laws of honour, injured virtue has a right to claim at my hands, appending thereto a timely warning that a non-compliance will be visited with 'bodily chastisement.' Hard conditions, truly! Shall I escape from all by a speedy flight?—rid you and others at the Kymes of an unwelcome visitor, a supposed barrier to your present aspirations, eh? Have a care that on this you have not speculated too confidently.

"Now, sir, these particulars being, as I read them, the substance and purport of your letter, I hasten to settle your mind by assuring you that, in consideration of your knightly courtesy, I should herein deem myself guilty of an additional personal wrong to you did I deprive you of so favourable an opportunity for the display of your prowess. I, therefore, beg to tender to you my

most unqualified refusal to either apologise to you for the alleged transgressions, or to recognise your assumed right at the Kymes, to there call any part of my conduct to account; whilst with equal forwardness, I do hereby challenge your courage, at the peril of your spurs, to administer to me, in any form whatsoever, that rebuke or chastisement of which you so magnanimously prate. Until then

“ I have the honour to subscribe, Sir,

“ Your obedient servant,

“ LORANCE LANGTON.”

The contents of this reply were received with manifest approbation; whereupon Saunders, with an expression of countenance very much akin, so far as one may conceive, to that of a conscientious man who, while yet experiencing an inward clinging to the frail thread of life, has, from a sense of duty, made up his mind to become a martyr or die the death of the brave, said—

“ Yes, Master Lorry, you have retorted and

resented the affront as became one of the ancient house you belong to, and with a spirit beseeming your character as a young gentleman ever since you came a boy to the Crypt, and you have done it, too, in the manner which all this parish would expect from your pluck since the day you went over the De'il's Kirk for the hawk's nest. It is a bad business, truly," he added, gravely, "a bad business, sir, for both families, who have lived always up to now upon the best of terms. But you have not sought it; it has been forced upon you, and no one can charge you with the consequences. And if in this wild neighbourhood, Master Lorry, you have no one else to counsel with, or stand by you in the matter than my poor humble self—and I know of nobody here I could trust you to—I'll do my best to have fair play and justice, though it should cost me my old life. But, sir," his gravity here relaxing, "I don't know what to say of that fine Southern baronet—whether he be a duelling man or no; only, if one may speak from appearances, I guess

he would prefer a combat with ladies' fans to broad swords. As to that fellow, his friend, they call Mr. Corby, I'm little concerned for him. I don't think he'll stand the stink o' pouter, for corbies are aye shy o' firearms. And then, if it come to a bout with leather thongs, you see, Master Lorry, as the skin at my time of life is not over thin, I think I shall have the advantage of him there. He! he! eh!"

"Well, at all events," said Lorange, with a hearty laugh, "if the two gentlemen have the pluck of a magpie between them, they are now bound to show it."

"But, Master Lorry," remarked the other, "didn't you say we had the choice of weapons?"

"I did, Saunders, and we unquestionably have, but they must be such as gentleman may use—anything, I suppose, but knives and fists, which are the weapons of assassins and blackguards. You will, therefore, have to make a proper choice and see to them."

Saunders, now evidently inspired with warlike

tendencies, signified a ready compliance, and after a few further remarks, the deliberations ended. Before a final close, however, it was settled upon as the proper course, that instead of Kay being made the bearer of Lorance's reply, Miss Murray's coachman should next day ride over to the Kymes, and deliver it in person.



## CHAPTER XII.

THE morning meal at the Kymes was not on the present occasion a repast remarkable for its animation or hilarity. There had been a time when it was otherwise.

“ But now that day had passed and gone,  
A stranger filled the Stuart throne.”

Upon this day it appeared almost solemn. It might have passed for a grave ceremonial, at which eating was performed as a reverential duty; eating only for eating's sake; eating of cold viands without a hot potato, without condiment, without even mint sauce; cold rabbit, *sans* curry, with the icicles hanging from the eaves.

With a feebleness of mind as of *physique*, the

lady-hostess was but ill-qualified to dispel the dull and depressing atmosphere that seemed to hover over the breakfast-table, or to impart any effervescent ingredient to the still beverage before her; but she saw without resource the spirits of her guests, like the sediment in troubled waters sink irretrievably to the bottom of their bosoms. There are times, in truth, when even the most vivacious of temperaments, despite every effort of the will, have their flowing and ebbing tides, and here was an exemplification, for not all the tact and talents of the accomplished baronet could now effectively resist, even on his own behalf, the force of the receding current.

Although the letter of the preceding day to the Crypt had been approved—in short, framed and critically amended by the joint wits of the only parties interested therein, yet the writer, on more mature reflection, and after he had slept over it, felt that his desire for his mistress's favour, and desire to scare the youth from the neighbourhood in order to advance his private aims without

interruption, had carried him somewhat too fast and too far ; consequently a sense of regret or silent penitence, which he could neither repress nor disguise, was now visible on his countenance ; and while his better sense thus admonished him, some other voice had also whispered in his ear that he had not only greatly mistaken the character of the young gentleman, but had grievously undervalued him as an adversary. With these untoward thoughts weighing upon his mind, the absence of his wonted gaiety at the breakfast-table may readily be accounted for ; and as his spirits and countenance by the hostess and her guests had always been looked to as the barometer of the house, they now naturally partook of the gloom. Further, the writing and despatch of a “thundering letter to the young cub”—the phrase is by Mr. Corby—had been made known to the young ladies, who, on learning of the circumstance, took an opportunity of reminding or informing their mother and her friends of the high sense of honour and courageous spirit of

Lorance, even when a boy, while they expressed their conviction that such a communication as had been represented to them would not only be promptly responded to, but in such a manner as might lead to hostile results—a contingency, which, until that morning, had never once entered the head of the self-complacent baronet, nor yet the minds of his abettors. But to return to the order of the morning.

Mrs. Keith occupied her wonted chair at the table. She looked more blooming and less concerned on the occasion than either her daughters or her guests. She was dressed in a light morning “wrapper,” or *robe de chambre*, drawn pursily about her waist by a fillet or band, tied in imitation of a rosette in front. Her head gear betrayed something of the evening elaboration, and she had on her feet a pair of red morocco slippers. Thus habited, her somewhat slender figure, light grey eyes, and languid expression, with a good mouth, presented a subject which an

artist might have wrought into a tolerable picture.

On her left sat her two daughters; at the further end of the table Mr. Andrew Corby, and on her right, *vis à vis* with the young ladies, Sir Francis Heronshaw and an elderley spinster-cousin of that gentleman, who had also been invited by the hospitable Mrs. Keith to bear her company in her present retirement.

This comprehends our *tableau vivant*, though it must be confessed there was but little of the *vivant* observable on the occasion.

Sir Francis Heronshaw had made the acquaintance of Colonel and Mrs. Keith through the medium and relationship of the Cranmore family, of whom respectful mention has elsewhere been made in our narrative. He was a native of the north of England, and had inherited, with his title, a few hundreds of paternal acres, which he had thought fit, deriving therefrom a small annuity, to place under the safe keeping of some

of those public benefactors who are everywhere to be found watching over the interests of mankind, and at all times ready to undertake similar responsibilities with those gay and thoughtless squanderers of their patrimonies, which, as we all know, constitute a considerable portion of our generous community. His present age might be reckoned at about thirty years. In his person he was tall, erect, and rather handsomely formed, and he always dressed up to the latest fashion, evincing, however, a partiality in his evenings for a blue coat and golden buttons. His morning habit was a frock of the same cloth, a light vest, and buff coloured cashmere pantaloons of the finest texture, strapped tightly down to his boots. His general features were good, pleasing, and regular ; his eyes were blue, full, and expressive of mildness ; his hair was light, thin and long, and his whiskers were of a darker shade. There was a blandness in his smile, and softness in the tones of his voice, which commonly pleased, if they did not enchant, a certain order of the fair

community, and his manners were polished, easy, and almost effeminate.

Sir Francis had been early in the oat market, and he had sown the grain freely; and with all his personal endowments and conciliating address there was yet a nameless something about him that stood between him and the warmer affections of those generally around him. Was it a want of heart, or the means of expressing its genuine sympathies? About his handsome features, too, there was still a lingering cast of the fast man, a faint brush-touch of the *blasè*, bespeaking of former free life, night carousals, and smoking divans. But these stray seeds now belonged to the past, and could be discerned only by the discriminating man of the world.

Mr. Andrew Corby—the next subject on our roll of important personages—the present *fidus Achates* of our baronet, was in every respect the antithesis of his patron. He was small in stature, plebeian in appearance, vulgar in manners, comical in look, and whose only recommendation to the



company seemed to consist in a fund of good humour, insensibility to affront, with a marvellous taste and talent for "low comedy." He could sing a humorous song, contort his coarse but flexible features into a multitude of grotesque shapes with the facility of an Indian rubber dwarf, of which, complexion considered, he bore a striking likeness. He could imitate with his voice the caw of the crow, the note of the cuckoo, the crow of the cock, the bark of the dog, and the mew of the cat, with singular fidelity ; perform numerous tricks in jugglery, slight of hand, and even aspired to palmistry and fortune-telling—illustrations in either of which he was ready at any time to furnish for the diversion of the company. From some house property in the county he derive a small income, which, by a stiff economy, a passable amount of decent deportment, a stock of free-and-easy assurance, he contrived to keep up a sort of visiting acquaintance among the lesser gentry, or the less fastidious of the aristocracy in the dull district around him, where

gentlemen were scarce. Upon such hospitable individuals he not unfrequently got himself billeted for days or weeks at a time, whereby he was enabled to eke out his small incompetency with tolerable success, often repaying such bounty by making himself "useful" to his patrons. For some private services rendered to Mrs. Keith, occasionally involving a journey to Glasgow, he had secured to himself an abiding place in the lady's favour, and was now at the Kymes, reaping the fruits of it.

It was upon one of his periodical visits to Cranmore that Mr. Corby first met his "esteemed friend the baronet," who, though a star of a somewhat different magnitude, was then making a similar circuit among his more bountiful friends. Thrown thus together under the same roof, and probably experiencing, through their corresponding circumstances, a sort of fellow-feeling for each other, a friendly intimacy sprung up between them. On the part of the baronet, however, this condescension had its object—its price. He had

heard of Miss Keith as a young lady of good fortune, had learnt of Mr. Corby's *entrée* to the house, and the favour in which he stood with the mother, and foresaw in him, as he thought, an instrument by which he might achieve an important purpose—namely, accomplish a marriage with the daughter, by whose dowry he might release from bondage his paternal property. But for this or some other useful end, Mr. Andrew Corby was not the individual whom the fashionable Englishman was likely to have chosen for a companion.

When the breakfast was finished, on rising from the table, the baronet moved towards the window, and there took up a position within the small alcove.

Mrs. Keith followed his example, and placed herself on the opposite side of the recess. The morning sun was lighting up the wild landscape, which now expanded itself in broad lines, with singular beauty, in front of the mansion.

Sir Francis, but sparingly endowed with the gift of enthusiasm, could not resist the captiva-

tion of the prospect; and as he was just in the act of directing the lady's attention to the glowing tints of a certain scene, their view was suddenly obscured by the figure of a horseman, passing close to the window on his way to the hall-door. The party was somewhat startled. It was a messenger from the Crypt, and the lady at once recognised her neighbour's coachman. The door was speedily opened.

"A letter for Sir Francis Heronshaw," said her footman, presenting it. Whereupon the receiver politely begged leave to withdraw for a few seconds. His absence was short, but on his return there was a slight flush upon his fair countenance. Observing that the young ladies had retired, and that Mr. Corby and his spinster kinswoman were engaged in conversation at the further end of the room, he addressed a few words in subdued tones to the hostess, still in her former place.

"Mrs. Keith," he said, "I will not withhold from your confidence any secrets in this matter,—I mean in the matter which formed the subject of

my letter to your young neighbour at the Crypt, to which I have now received a reply."

"Sir Francis," answered the lady, with a look of easy or indifferent concern, "I hope the thoughtless young man has profited by your rebuke; and I am sure, Sir Francis, it was so very kind in you to do so much for me. I suppose he has made a proper apology."

The baronet coloured deeper.

"If he hasn't, I think I will write myself to his aunt, as he calls the proud and stately old queen at the Crypt. For I will not sit under an affront or wrong done to either me or my guests, from anyone. If the Colonel were here, he would not allow it."

The lady uttered these sentences with a drawling, apathetic tone of voice, which contrasted singularly with the expression of the listener.

"I am afraid, Madam," he replied, "that the young gentleman has not yet profited by my letter. He has not made an apology."

“But won’t you write to him again, Sir Francis, and insist upon an apology?”

“But what if he don’t comply, Mrs. Keith?”

“But I would insist upon it, until he do.”

“In what manner?”

“I think, Sir Francis, I must write myself.”

“Will you permit me, Mrs. Keith,” said the baronet, blandly, but apparently getting short of patience, “to now advise chiefly in this affair, and to suggest that your mind be not further trespassed upon by it, and that it may be left entirely for the deliberations of Mr. Corby and myself. I cannot have you troubled in any way whatsoever.”

“Well, well, Sir Francis, I will let you have your own way; and you will let me know if you want me to write.” So said the easy lady, taking her leave.

Although spoken aside, his conversation was not lost on the far-hearing and large ears of Mr. Corby. He now rose and advanced to join the

baronet, who had beckoned him to do so ; and after an exchange of some words, the two set out together to discuss the merits of the letter on a gentle walk. When they had proceeded to a sufficient distance, where a bend in the road, abutted upon by a wood, hid them from view of the house, Sir Francis drew the letter from his pocket, and read the contents aloud to his companion.

“What an impertinent young cub, to be sure!” said Mr. Corby, when the other had finished the perusal. “Such a fellow to have the assurance to write in that manner to one in your position, old fellow!—I mean Sir Francis”—correcting the familiar phrase, which he saw the baronet did not relish at the time. “Why, I’ll be shot if I don’t horsewhip the whelp myself for his insolence.”

“Then, Mr. Corby, ye had better get the gun ready, and I’ll speak to the rabbit-catcher to oblige ye in drawing my trigger. For afore ye got a second crack o’ the whip at Mr. Lorry, I’se



bail for't, ye'd ha'e the skin as clean off your hurdies (and that may be tough enough) as ever Peggie, the cook, flayed an eel."

"Who the devil are you, Sir? and where are you?" shouted Corby, staring around him—the two utterly confounded by the voice. At length they discovered a human figure perched aloft upon a bushy tree. "Come down instantly," he added, "you eaves-dropping scoundrel, or I'll send a sharp messenger to you."

"If you're nae better marksman wi' a stane than ye're wi' lead draps, Mr. Corby," answered the man, in nowise disconcerted by the threat, "ye'll no do me muckle harm. And as t' eaves-drappers, I think there's twa o' us; for if a's true the kaittyurians say, ye're no unco bad at that yoursel'. But I'll come down, at ony rate, when I'll give ye ony satisfaction ye like, man, but lend ye siller."

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said Corby, suddenly recognising the face of the individual, as he alighted down upon the ground.

“It’s just me, gentlemen,” he remarked, touching his hat to Sir Francis; “and very much at your service.”

“Let us move on, Sir Francis,” said his companion, and the two did move on; leaving the other (who was a man of an active and vigorous frame, of about the age of thirty years) to pick up, unmolested, some birch twigs, which he had just cut from the tree for the purpose of manufacturing into a broom.

“Who is that?” asked the baronet, when they had got out of his hearing. “I am much annoyed that he should have heard the contents of the letter.”

“I forget the impudent vagabond’s name,” answered Corby, “but he’s to be met with everywhere, and knows, I believe, every living creature between John o’ Groats and Land’s End. He travels about country with a large van, and commonly goes by the title of the “Owner of the Van,”—deals in every mortal thing, from a wooden trencher to a thrashing machine; and will stake his twenty pounds upon a race with the

best gentleman in the land ; and, faith, can pay it as well, too, if he loses. And he will lend a man a ten-pound note, which is saying something in his favour, as readily as any banker I know of. But I don't think the fellow could hear the words of the letter."

"He speaks the Lowland tongue," observed the baronet.

"Yes, and the knave can speak Gaelic as well, if he likes ; but he was bred about the Borders, I believe."

They now resumed the subject of the letter.

"What do you advise to be done ?" inquired Sir Francis, gravely. "In my position, I should lose caste if I allowed a gentleman, young though he be, to beard me in this business since now, it must have become known to many."

"And you cannot afford, under your peculiar circumstances, to lose a feather's weight of your fair character, more than myself," said Corby, and laughed aloud at his intended wit, which was not, however, received with much relish by the other.

“Do you think I ought to send him a challenge? I am now in honour bound to follow up my letter.”

“That were the right thing to do, my cock,” (the low familiarity again shocked the baronet), “if he chanced to be a gentleman of equal rank, which I protest he is not, he being but the son of an Indian merchant, and, worse still, the grandson of a rebel.”

Sir Francis drew a breath, but shook his head,

“Besides, my dear Sir Francis,” continued Mr. Andrew Corby, “the ladies at the Kymes cannot afford to lose your head, and I cannot afford to lose your good company.”

“And ladies cannot afford to forego courage and honour in a man, and I cannot afford to forego the favour of the ladies,” said the baronet, mildly.

“Honour be it then—go at it,” and he repeated—

“’Tis in the breech where honour’s lodged,  
As wise philosophers have judged;  
Because a kick in that place more  
Hurts honour than deep wounds before.”

“Why not then,” added the counsellor, “pre-

serve your honour by half-a-dozen kicks of the fellow, and be done with him?"

"That sort of thing, Corby, won't do for me," replied the baronet. "But do you think if I were to send him a definite *ultimatum* or formal challenge, it would bring him to his knees—he is young and might be *cowed* by it?—Of course you would stand in for *friend* in case of need."

"The d——l I do," returned the other, briskly. "It would raise the bristles on his back like a terrier at the smell of a brock in his earth, and, he, like the animal, would either die on the spot or bolt his game. By Jove, Sir Francis, think of that in time! As to standing your friend, keep your heart up on that point—I would meet a Goliath for that matter."

"Don't you, then, think I am bound to send him one?"

"I think no such thing."

"What then?"

"Get out of the confounded mess the best way you can."

"By what means?"

“ If all else fail become Christian for once.”

“ Explain yourself.”

“ Why, if he won’t apologise to you, you apologise to him. That’s catechism, isn’t it? or in the Proverbs? For my part I am Christian enough not to be over thin skinned in my honour. He! he! he!”—and Mr. Corby laughed heartily.

“ What! I apologise!”

“ You apologise—vow that you had written your letter under a wrong inspiration, and, as a gentleman of honour towards another, you now felt bound to make with all speed the *amende honorable*, as the frog-eating chaps of La Belle France would say.”

“ Confound the fellow !” ejaculated the baronet ;  
“ am I deliberately to make Mrs. Keith, whose name I especially used in my letter, and you yourself, appear as forgers of false charges against him? How, after such an act, could I meet the lady face to face, even though my good Mr. Corby might forgive me?”

“ Solomon, or some old historical wag—I

forget who—says that a woman's tongue is sharper than a two-edged sword. If my gallant Sir Francis dreads that weapon more than a Toledo blade, or Cornish bullets, or may be a Pagan tomahawk, for aught one can tell, then, I say, with all speed let him send for Youkie, the writer, to make his will."

"Nay, nay," answered the baronet, his ardour somewhat abated, "I should not apprehend even reproach from Mrs. Keith, did I compromise her name in the matter, if good were to accrue from it; yet her daughters might well blush for the man who could do so."

"Even so; blushes do not draw blood," urged Corby, perceiving the success of his argument; "but if you will think of everybody's blushes before your own fair skin, you must take the consequences. Blushes! aye, women's blushes, what are they? Only baubles and tinted gewgaws for sentimental swains to toy with; they are not fit things for men, like us, made of sterner stuff. But why not take example from other



sensible cavaliers at the distant smell of powder in their noses, pocket the affront of the whelp's letter, and save your bones by assuming a dignified contempt for his insolence? True, this is often the resort of cowards, but, hang me! if I should make my body a target to be shot at for any old woman in Christendom. Besides, if you got a bullet through your waistcoat, or got cloven in two by a tomahawk, what would become of your impounded acres, leave alone the tears of your fair Rosamond? Then, too, I should be obliged to put on the weeds of the crow, and where is the tailor's costs to come from?"

The baronet listened to this comical harangue with a marked gravity, and without interposing a word, while the other, pressing his advantage, and with an air of droll earnestness, went on—

“But, my dear fellow, do not think of me, and my cabbaging tailors; think of your own position at this momentous hour of your precious life. Put your fair prospects and all your substantial valuables into one scale, your beloved

commodity of honour into the other, hold up the balance, and you will see where the glittering bubble will be. By the old Harry ! man, it's my opinion that if were we both, singly or in lot, put up to public auction to-morrow, our united stock of it would not bring the auctioneer's fees."

The speaker concluded his remarks with another of his grimaces, and a familiar poke with his elbow in the ribs of his listener, which, upon this grave occasion, were received with apparent good will.

"I tell you what, Corby," now said Sir Francis, after a few moments in silent reflection, "you bear about with you a strange system of logic, which I think is calculated to carry its possessor through perplexities which a more refined code would find very embarrassing; and if in listening to you as its expounder, I become a temporary convert to the doctrine, and adopt its principles to help me through this painful business, you well know to whom I am indebted for the change. As the first act, then, in my new belief, let me sub-

mit to my preceptor a proposition that has just occurred to me—What do you say to your taking an early and quiet ride over to the Crypt, and sounding the temper of young Langton in the affair, you appearing there ostensibly on your own account as the friend of the two families?”

“A devilish good idea for the noddle of my dull disciple,” answered Corby, with a twist of his face, “provided his ambassador of peace were to be received there with an olive branch instead of a prickly sloe-thorn, which stubborn tree grows very plentifully in my Leddie Jean’s pleasurable woods. But, by the cowl of St. Andrew (my namesake and pious ancestor), I’m your man for the job, and I’ll be off instanter—so there’s my hand, my dear Fra—I mean Sir Francis.”

“My dear fellow, never mind *sirs* at present, when pressing business is to be done,” returned the other, smiling with relief.

“Your hand *Frankly*, then—excuse the pun—it comes *natural* to me. My father before me had the gift; and if in my mission I don’t uphold

your dignity and bring you off with meet honour, then never again trust me as a diplomatist."

"Anyhow, you will merit my best thanks," said the other. "But do you mean to ride over this afternoon?"

"No, Sir Francis," was the reply. "On second thoughts, I judge it better to eat and sleep on the venture, whereby I shall have time to digest my dinner in quiet, and see my way all the more clearly on the following morning."

## CHAPTER XIII.

## MR. CORBY'S DIPLOMATIC VISIT TO THE CRYPT.

It was about twelve o'clock on the day following the preceding deliberations, when two persons were seen moving slowly down the avenue which stretched its short length between the mansion of the Kymes and the public road that conducted to the Crypt. One of them was on foot, the other on horse back, and they were conversing in almost whispers as they proceeded. They were Sir Francis Heronshaw and Mr. Andrew Corby; the latter was mounted, and thus quietly setting out

on his mission to the Crypt. He had made a plan, and noted down on the tablet of his retentive memory the heads of that scheme and line of tactics with which he meant to open and conduct the diplomatic business he had undertaken on the previous day.

“I will not allow you to go a foot further, Sir Francis,” said Mr. Corby, tightening up the reins of his bridle, “because it was on this very place, by the side of this stream, that I heard those ill-starred words from the lips of the fellow which have caused all this infernal hubbub. I wish to G—— my ears had been with my hands, in my pockets, at the time. So that, you see, if you turn your foot steps back from the unlucky spot, you will perhaps turn away with them the wrath it has engendered.”

The baronet readily complied, and the other went onward.

Mr. Corby was an indifferent horseman, and always rode at walking pace. In all weathers, wet or dry, hot or cold, it was the same with

him. When he had advanced to within about a quarter of a mile from his destination, and just as the public road began to emerge from the wild woods and stretch over a portion of moorland, he suddenly observed the moving figure of a man before him ; whereupon, as if intending by a slight detour on the open space to avoid the individual, he drew the horse a little to a side, and entered upon the sod.

“Ye need’na trouble, Mr. Corby. I’m no vera hungry, nor vera vindictive” (referring to a former greeting), “so I’ll neither eat ye nor harm ye.”

The speaker was none other than the stalwart “owner of the van,” and shrewdly guessing the other’s object to be to avoid him, he was cruel enough not to let him pass unrecognised.

“Good morning to ye,” answered Mr. Corby, in reply, not a little discomposed, but immediately recovering his wonted mode, and disregarding the words he had heard. “Good morning t’ye. I always forget your name, friend. It’s—it’s John, John—something, I believe.”



“Now, Mr. Corby,” said the other, humourously, “you must just find my name where you last lost it; but this I will tell ye—it descended to me from yin o’ Scotland’s famous kings, as yours did from her patron saint. So, by the same token, you will see, sir, that as the throne is aboon the kirk, I must claim your fealty and obedience.”

Though by no means relishing this dominion and ill-timed waggery, he nevertheless bowed a gracious acknowledgment, and said,

“Then, sire, with your royal permission, I will crave leave to proceed on my journey,” with which he gave the reins to the horse and moved on.

“Confound the insolent vagabond,” he muttered to himself, when he had got beyond the other’s hearing. “I wish both him and his name, and all the kings’ and saints’ names in the calendar were at the bottom of the sea. Hang me, if he hasn’t put the whole of my plans and ideas into a jumble of confusion.”

Resuming his former pace, however, he soon advanced to within view of the old mansion.

Running his eyes over the front wall, he observed the figure of a female at one of the higher windows, which, on catching sight of him, instantly disappeared. Lacking courage, probably, to face the main door, he shaped his course directly to the stables. The huge watch-dog barked in the court-yard, which speedily brought the coachman from his work. He was without his coat and hat.

“Good morning,” said Mr. Corby, accompanying his word with a respectful bow. “Is Mr. Langton at home?”

“He is, sir, but engaged,” was the reply.

“Is Mr. Saunders in the way? Perhaps he would do as well,” added the visitor, alighting.

“If ye stop a minute, sir, I’ll see,” upon which the coachman, leaving him standing with the horse in his hand, entered the house. He was absent for about three or four minutes; then, returning, he said,

“If ye walk round to the front door ye’ll see him there, for he is working in the hall.”

“Aye, I must needs eat humble pie with that old consequential donkey—proud as his mistress. He is working, forsooth ! and doesn’t condescend to leave off and come to me, but I must go to him. As if his work were of any consequence to anybody ! Hang me ! but I’ll give myself an additional inch in height, and exalt my tone accordingly, for the fellow’s impudence.” So muttered Mr. Andrew Corby, as he walked the few paces between the yard and the house.

The door was already opened, awaiting his arrival, and Saunders, also without his coat, had taken up a position upon the mat within, his hands besmeared with oil and red rust, and holding in one of them a piece of doeskin leather. His face was reddened, and otherwise bore evidence of the important work he had upon his hands. Behind him, upon an oaken table in the hall, lay a broad sword, a pair of horseman’s pistols of vast size and calibre, in flint locks and brass mountings ; a bow and sheaf of arrows ; and behind them again a couple of heavy whips,

the formidable bellies of which being bound down, as if to keep the peace, to their stiff handles by the taper portion of the thongs.

“Good day, Mr. Saunders,” said the visitor, suddenly startled as his eyes fell upon the weapons, and rather contracting than dilating his small proportions. “I have just rode over to inquire after the health of the Leddie; but, bless me! what are all these weapons for? Are ye preparing against an invasion of the French, or our old Scandinavian enemies?”

“Only, Mr. Corby, scouring up the old barrels and blades,” answered the butler, very coolly. “The young master and myself have been taking a little practice of late, for one never knows when such things may be needed.”

“Very true, Mr. Saunders, but these are a pair of murderous pistols of yours,” said Corby, looking particularly struck by their size.

“Yes, these are what I prefer. Mr. Langton has a pair of hair triggers, with a small bore; but I like a wide barrel that will leave its mark be-

hind it. But can I do anything for you, Mr. Corby?" said Saunders, turning to the purpose of the visit, apparently pleased with the effect the display of his weapons had already produced.

"I should like a word privately with you," the other replied, with a submissive air.

"Then you had better walk into this room," said the butler, showing the way, "for Miss Murray and Mr. Langton will just pass here on their way out for a drive."

"I have rode over, as I said before, to enquire after the health of the lady," repeated Corby, when he had entered the apartment, "and as I understand there has been some unpleasant letters exchanged between Mr. Langton and a gentleman now staying at the Kymes, I was anxious, being a friend of both parties, to hear both sides of the quarrel, and interpose, if possible, my peaceful offices in the matter."

"Then, if that be your object, sir," said Saunders, stiffly, "you had better, I think, address yourself first to the gentleman at the

Kymes; for, in matters with gentry, I know Mr. Langton will not hold any communication through inferior persons. Therefore, if your friend there has any explanation or apology to make for whatever he may have done or said, he had better address himself directly to the proper quarter. For my part I cannot undertake without authority to meddle in any private business of Mr. Langton's."

Mr. Corby, finding himself thus closeted with a better diplomatist than he had calculated upon, now scratched his head and looked very much like a man who has lost his way in a mist, and is uncertain in his mind whether to at once retreat or make another effort to proceed. Like a gleam of light suddenly thrown upon his path, however, a new idea struck him, and he thought he would try its effects, knowing well that his man was quite in the confidence of his young master.

"Speaking of pistols, Mr. Saunders," said he, smiling significantly, "I think my friend, Sir Francis Heronshaw, is the best shot and swords-

man in this county ; he can top a candle, or take the eye out of a turkey-cock, as clean as anything I ever saw done ; and as to the sword, he can handle it with the dexterity of a carving-knife in his hand. And he is a mortal fire-eater for courage."

"Indeed !" replied the butler, looking the other gravely in the face, "then ye must have seen the gentleman's performance ; yet I have never heard of any such doing hereabouts, except it might be with the carving knife you have named."

"No, not here, he is very quiet among our hills. But in England, where he is known, at balls and parties, he is the terror of the next ten counties around him."

"Are you a shot yourself, Mr. Corby ?"

"Never fired a pistol in my life, except once at a hideous tom-cat, and I missed the infernal brute, and nearly wrenched off my arm for my pains."

Saunders was not sorry to hear this admission.

"But," said he, "you're, may be, a judge of



shooting for all that, and if you'll just step out with me, and down the bank there—Oh! don't be afraid, I'm not going to take any arms with me—I will show you a little of Mr. Langton's skill."

He consented, and the old man led the way; when they reached the spot—

"Look there, sir," he said, "ye see that tree with the small white spot in the centre of it? Well, just step twelve yards from it, where ye will see a small pin in the ground, then cast your eye upon these eighteen bullet marks, all clustered round within five inches of the white spot, four having entered it, and tell me what ye think of that shooting."

"Pretty fair for a beginner," said Corby, affecting a great amount of coolness in his answer. "But," he enquired, "what are all those great blisters on the bark, two or three yards from the bull's eye?"

"Two or three *feet*, you mean—those are some of my own work with the big pistols you saw, but

my hand is coming fast in," added Saunders, with a side glance on the visage of his visitor.

The two now retraced their steps to the house, apparently satisfied with the interview, and without any further reference to the business in question, Mr. Corby was soon again in his saddle.

On his return homeward the first person he met was Sir Francis; he had been out walking round the pleasure-grounds. Corby, somewhat crestfallen, reluctantly communicated the result of his mission, at which the baronet appeared seriously concerned, the more especially on listening to the warlike preparations and deadly practice against the tree at the Crypt.

"By Heavens! Corby, what is to be done?" he exclaimed, "I never made half-a-dozen pistol shots in my life, and could not hit a bullock within ten feet of me."

"Hush! don't say that so loudly," advised the other, "for I have just vowed, in hopes of intimidating them, that you were the most deadly shot in all England. But, hang me! if it seemed to

make the least impression upon the blood-thirsty old villain I parleyed with. Master and servant, I solemnly declare, are bent upon the death of both of us, if we give them a chance."

"But the prize is not always to the marksman, any more than the race is to the swift."

"A fig for your fine precepts! Sir Francis," said Corby. "Give me a pair of good heels against a legion of foes, and I'll leave other prize-lovers to make targets of themselves, who are tired of their lives."

"But you do not mean to say—"

"That I would not fly from certain death," interrupted Mr. Corby, "with the speed of a crow that has heard the click of the trigger behind the hedge. By the Old Harry! just put it to my option, and you will see where I shall be, or rather where I shall *not* be."

"But I must do something," added the baronet.

"Are you a swordsman, Sir Francis? You're a master in the science of carving."

“There, then, my skill in weapons rests—at the table.”

“The best and safest of all battle-fields—the enemy killed to your hand, soused and roasted, with his arms or wings skewered down to prevent a stray thrust. By Jove! but I honour you ten-fold for your taste. He! he! he!”—and Mr. Corby laughed one of his immoderate laughs.

At this juncture the footman came forward, and intimated that luncheon was on the table.

Sir Francis ate but little, but took two or three glasses of sherry. Mr. Corby's ride had sharpened his appetite, and he devoured nearly a whole fowl, with a proportional amount of ham, and moistened his throat frequently. When the repast was over Corby went to sleep in his chair, and the baronet took a cigar in the open air.

“Sir Francis,” said Mrs. Keith, who had seen and joined the baronet walking by himself, “you seem disturbed in mind. Will you allow a woman's interest and curiosity to enquire the cause?”

“Certainly, madam. The curiosity of one so kind must ever be gratifying,” he replied, with his usual blandness of manner.

“Mr. Corby has been to the Crypt. I hope he has not been the bearer of anything unpleasant to you,” said the lady.

“I have had no communication, good or bad, with anyone there,” answered the gentleman.

“Mr. Corby rode over on his own personal account, and only saw some of the servants.”

“The proud folks there didn’t deign to see him, I suppose. But I now heartily wish the indiscreet conduct of the young man had been overlooked by us all,” added the lady, “since it has caused annoyance to you, and so much unpleasantness in my family. The girls have gone out of their wits about it, and hardly ever give me any of their company. Agnes is afraid, foolish girl, that it may lead to some personal strife between you and the youth, who is very headstrong, and she is, no doubt, greatly con-

cerned on your account, although her youth and diffidence prevent her showing it to you."

"My dear Mrs. Keith," replied the baronet, gratefully, "I am much flattered by this expression of your own and your daughter's sentiments on my behalf. But so far as individually concerned in the matter, I am under no apprehension of anything very serious resulting from it, beyond, perhaps, a suspension for a time of friendly intercourse between the two families. I am always peacefully disposed, and even when under an injury or misapprehension, my motto is conciliatory measures."

"I am glad to hear that, Sir Francis. You are so good a creature, to be sure."

Sir Francis blushed as he met the fair speaker's eyes. She continued—

"But do you think if I were to write a friendly letter to Miss Murray—although I don't much relish the stuck-up old creature—that it would pacify her ill-mannered nephew? I want no in-

timacy with either, but desire only to have ourselves freed from strife and annoyance."

"I really think, my dear madam, your idea is an admirable one," observed Sir Francis. "But yonder comes Mr. Corby. I shall submit it to his opinion at once."

"Yes, do, Sir Francis; for,—and I must be frank with you, I have now reasons—you must not ask a woman for reasons—to wish that the all-important matter betwixt you and my family to be consummated with as little further delay as circumstances will allow. I may be more explicit by and bye."

The listener's eyes sparkled, and he bowed an acquiescence. The lady then moved towards the door as the third party advanced.

Mr. Corby approved of the suggestion of the lady, as he, like the baronet himself, was now most anxious to catch at any device by which they might become extracted from their untoward position.

Mrs. Keith did write to the Crypt, but upon



the substance of her communication we shall offer no comment. And Miss Murray answered the letter in pungent and characteristic terms. She expressed her surprise at the receipt of a letter from one whose name she had never heretofore had occasion to recognise among her correspondents in the country ; Colonel Keith and his two daughters—for whom she had always entertained and would continue to entertain sentiments of friendly affection—being the only members of the Kymes family, with whom she had ever been on terms of intimacy. She was, she observed, from her private and secluded life, but little exposed to intrusive or unmannerly communications, but in times when such had occurred, it was her invariable custom to decline their acknowledgment. The high esteem in which she held Colonel Keith, and her love for his children, were, however, on the present occasion, more than a sufficient reason for a departure from ordinary rule. She could not forsake, she averred, her feminine office so far as to mingle in the quarrels or breaches of good

behaviour of gentlemen; but, for the reasons assigned, she would undertake to commune with her nephew, and endeavour, while his honour and the privileges of his rank—the especial properties of a gentleman—remained intact, to avert further grief or shame from a house that at this moment ought to be clothed in sackcloth and ashes. If, therefore, the author of the “much regretted letter” referred to were to adopt the usual polite course of rectifying his mistake, she doubted not that the generous nature of Mr. Langton would readily overlook it.

Despite her natural apathy, Mrs. Keith was not proof against the trenchant and admonitory epistle she had received. She winced under its severity, and her pride paled before the humiliation so unsparingly awarded to her. This, too, she felt the more keenly, not only because she had brought it upon herself, but because it had come from one whom she professed to deride or despise. Her pangs were not, however, of long continuance, and although, by the trio in

council, the sentiments of the latter were generally severally commented upon, the wounds inflicted found an agreeable balsam in the prospect of a peaceful termination of the impending troubles. And to this thanks are especially due to Mr. Saunders, for the admirable manner in which he conducted his "diplomatic conference" with Mr. Andrew Corby. A sight of the whips, the huge pistols, and above all the marks on the tree, had told effectively upon the "fire-eating" knight and his squire. And the triumph of the old man may be readily conceived, when, on the following day, his young master read to him an apology from Sir Francis Heronshaw.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## MRS. KEITH EXHORTS HER DAUGHTERS.

PISTOLS, swords, and leathern thongs restored to their accustomed places in the dusty repository at the Crypt, Lorance Langton had many a hearty laugh at the ingenuity of his valorous squire, on whom the palm of bloodless victory was duly conferred. Nor, at the Kymes, had the sudden "suspension of hostilities" been regarded with less genuine satisfaction. True, in the preliminary skirmishing Mrs. Keith had not escaped a well-directed shaft, but as the lady's vitality was not thereby seriously affected, the superficial wound was soon healed. By a unanimous vote,

the cherished honour and knightly prowess of Sir Francis Heronshaw were pronounced to have come off altogether scathless and unimpeachable, and as to Mr. Corby, he humorously declared that neither his heels nor his skin had been put to the test in the matter, for which omission he assured the baronet he would for this once forgive him.

After clouds comes sunshine, but with that sunshine often descend, like angel's tears, the purest of crystal drops. It was now so at the Kymes.

Upon this morning Mrs. Keith was unusually cheerful. In her latest bulletin from Edinburgh, she had received a favourable report of her husband's condition. The Colonel was, in short, better than he had yet been since his first prostration, and even faint hopes of his recovery were now entertained by his physicians. This news in itself was sufficient to account for a joyful change on the countenance of a loving wife. But this lady, it is feared, had a different incentive to her cheerfulness. The news afforded her a

pretext by which she could, with a greater show of decency, urge on her cherished scheme for a marriage between the baronet and her eldest daughter, while that daughter, with her little sister by her side, was privately shedding bitter tears at the prospect. Delay might be followed by two serious consequences. A rapid progress in the invalid might frustrate her purpose, by opening up a communication between him and his children, to whom he was devotedly attached; and a sudden reverse in his state, terminating, perhaps, in dissolution, must, according to the outward symbols of propriety, compel a delay of some length, and in delay there was danger to this purpose. So reasoned Mr. Keith, as she entered the boudoir of her two daughters.

“Agnes,” she said, “I wish you to understand that it is the desire of your parents that you should be provided with a protector to uphold the rank and station of our house, and secure a home for your sister, while they are yet in the land of the living, which, to all appearance, may

not be long. For, as you know, I am never free from that head ache and nervous sensation, and trembling all over when the least thing puts me about; and we are all too well aware of the uncertainty of your affectionate father's condition."

Agnes looked to Grizzel, and Grizzel to Agnes, then both burst into fresh tears.

"It is very silly of you, children," added the lady, plaintively, "crying at the prospect of your own happiness."

The two continued, with their handkerchiefs raised to their eyes in silent distress, each having one hand clasped in the other's, as they sat close together on the couch. The mother looked on impatiently for a few seconds.

"Have you nothing to return for a mother's love and care but tears and sobs," she inquired, somewhat moved by the scene.

"Mamma, it isn't at the prospect of our happiness, but our misery," answered the youngest daughter, looking into her sister's face.

"Why so, child?"



“Because, if we hadn’t either you or papa, how could we be happy? And you have said,” continued the afflicted child, “that you may both die, and leave us.”

“And it is with a true sense of that uncertainty of life while here, that it becomes the solemn duty of parents to provide for their children, and children to be grateful and obedient to their parents while they have them,” said Mrs. Keith, evidently feeling satisfied that if her cause was not the best, she had alighted upon the best line of argument for its advocacy.

“But, mamma,” said Agnes, her eyes reddened with tears, “papa never said to me that he wished me to marry anyone while I am so young; and certainly before his accident, and when Sir Francis began to come to the house, he did not like him, and told me he was sure he had been a spendthrift.”

“I thought so, too,” answered the mother, “but we have had reason to change our opinions since that time.”

“ But surely neither you nor papa would wish me to marry (if I must marry) a man I do not like.”

“ Why, Agnes ! you talk like all foolish girls, whose heads are turned by novel reading and such like stuff. I myself didn’t like your father at first ; and you know how long we have lived together without a single quarrel under our roof.”

“ But why did you marry papa without liking him ?”

“ For position—for I had as good a home as he had—and because it is the fashion, I suppose, to marry,” said the mother, with a little energy ; “ and it is for the first of these reasons that we now wish you to marry a man of rank and title, while an opportunity offers.”

“ But I do not think the position of the person you allude to is superior to my father’s,” returned the daughter, with some decision ; “ and rather than take a person merely for an empty title, I should prefer a man I loved with nothing

but an honourable name, although I do not require to do so."

"Of course not. I know who you mean; but him you shall not marry. So do not make me ill, Agnes. A woman will in time learn to like any man who loves her; and Sir Francis loves you to madness, for he told me so. And further, he says, that if you do not marry him soon, he is sure that he will destroy himself; and that is more than your father ever said about me."

"Ay, I'll stand bail for ye there, my leddie," said a voice without.

The mother and daughters were alike startled by the words, and instantly turned their eyes on the window, whence came the sounds. They saw that it was open, and the fair speaker, with the sublimity in her gait of a tragedian, advanced, looked out, then pulled down the sash in great wrath.

"So we have eavesdroppers and spies on us everywhere," she ejaculated.

The daughters made no reply; but the mother

was not to be balked of her purpose : like a hen with her young brood around her, that has been suddenly scared by a roving kite, casting her wings down and her crest up, she looked fierce and angry.

“ Daughters !” she added, her eyes sparkling with unusual animation, “ I will have you to understand that your parents expect implicit obedience to their commands while you remain dependant upon them.”

“ Commands ! mother,” said Agnes, turning her face upon the speaker with an expression of surprise, “ and when have we received commands that we have disobeyed ?”

“ I did not say you had,” answered the mother ; “ but I merely wished to remind you that such is at all times required of you. The Holy Scriptures command that children be obedient to their parents, and pronounce a curse upon all those who shall be found disobedient.”

Mrs. Keith, in the exercise of her maternal authority on this subject, invariably made use of

the word *parents*, the grammatical propriety of which her daughters often inwardly questioned; but their father's illness and inaccessible state totally left them without any private appeal to his will. For the present, however, the lady was satisfied with the impression she had made upon her daughters, and now turned her footsteps elsewhere. She entered the drawing-room, and hastily rang the bell.

"Henderson," she said, as the footman answered the summons, "have you seen any person walking or loitering about the outside of the west balcony windows?"

"I have not, madam," answered the servant.

"Go to the stables, and inform Kay that I require him immediately."

The footman obeyed, and the old groom returned with him.

At this moment her two guests approached the door, from a walk.

"Come in, Sir Francis," she said, "I wish you to be present. I will explain to you directly."

Then addressing herself to the groom, who now stood before his mistress uncovered, but looking in no degree disconcerted by her irate presence.

“Kay,” she began, “of late I have had frequent occasion to complain of your want of proper respect for me, as also for some of those now staying under my roof; and to-day I have experienced a rudeness that I can no longer overlook.”

“I am sorry to hear that, madam,” said Kay; “for, at my time o’ life, I ought to know my duty and my place, and observe ’em likewise. But will ye please to make known to me now when and where this rudeness happened.”

“When and where, sir,—when and where! but under the west balcony, not ten minutes ago, when I was speaking with my daughters, in their room.”

“Well, madam, ye may perhaps think it rude in an old servant to contradict ye, afore these gentlemen, and to tell the truth.”

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“Nay, nay,” interposed the baronet, “you would not surely—”

“Weel, weel, Sir Francis,” interrupted the servant, “if ye are better intitled to defend what is untrue, than I am to speak the truth, ye may please yourself. But I have only to say that I have not this day been so near the balcony as I am now; and have not been out of the stable-yard, till Henderson called me, since I first entered it this morning.”

“That is very strange,” said the lady, looking dubiously, “for I surely heard your voice under the window.”

“No, madam, you could not hear my voice, although I heard yours in the distance, for the window was up, as I thought, and you were speaking high. But I did not think it my place to listen, or otherwise notice what was said.”

“Have you seen any stranger, or anybody else about the grounds this morning?”

“I never concern myself, madam, with who comes and goes about the house,” answered the



groom. "The stable-yard is my jurisdiction, and I see to it only."

"You may go, Kay," said the mistress, evincing a little impatience in her manner, for she dared not directly dispute the word of the honest and independent servant.

The door had no sooner been closed behind him, than one of the maid-servants entered the room, who said that she had observed a man pass at a short distance from the window in question, bearing a parcel under his arm.

Further, a light was soon thrown on the matter, whereby it appeared that the said person was there, or in its immediate vicinity, by an express appointment of the lady herself, for the purpose of privately showing, or delivering into her own hands, some contraband lace and other valuable commodities appertaining to ladies' apparel, and that the lady, in the ardour of her pursuits elsewhere, had either neglected or forgotten her engagement, until the patience of the owner of the van (for it was none other than our old acquaint-

anc) had failed him. Consequently, annoyed by the neglect, and hearing through the open window her harsh exhortations to her daughters—for the latter of whom he had a cherished regard, while for the former he had a secret contempt, albeit, her business transactions with him—he could not refrain, at so opportune a moment, of giving expression to his disgust, and of reminding her of the old proverb, that “walls have ears,” especially to loud voices.

Upon the conclusion of this inquiry, Mrs. Keith and the baronet held a long conversation together.

It was thought by the lady that the maternal pressure of a very few days would bring her daughter to consent to the nuptials; but, in order to provide the better against a miscarriage of her hopes, she deemed it desirable that all chance of communication between Agnes and Mr. Langton should be duly provided against. She had reason, she said, to believe that a clandestine corres-

pondence had been put into practice in that quarter, since the youth's exclusion from the Kymes ; and, as a provision against its continuance, she suggested that Miss Stork, the maiden lady and cousin of the baronet, now residing in the house, should be solicited to give her daily company to Agnes and her sister, and to keep a vigilant watch upon their movements when out upon their walks, as also within doors.

This being decreed, a circumstance shortly occurred which evoked its rigid enforcement.

Out walking one day, little Grizzel was observed to present to her sister a small nosegay of beautiful wild flowers, which she had just received from the hands of the groom.

For years it had been a habit of the child to occasionally scamper off from those in her company towards the stable-yard, to have a little conversation with her father's favourite old servant, who regarded "little miss" with singular affection, and often, when abroad upon business,

contrived to reward her attentions by presenting her with some trifling memorial on his return.

When at home, her father used to view such simple acts of kindness with a fond indulgence; but of late these reciprocal greetings had been regarded with disfavour by the child's mother; they had in short, been interdicted. Still, despite the maternal veto, when the spirit moved her, perverse Grizzel would, in right of old custom, bound away on top speed to have a word with "dear old Kay."

It was on her return from one of these frolicsome expeditions that Grizzel now bore in her hand the bunch of wild flowers just noticed.

Simple and ordinary as the circumstance would seem, it did not escape the curiosity of Miss Stork (now naturally invested with the chaste order of *duenna*) who at once asked to smell the nosegay.

Agnes, colouring somewhat, could not refuse the request; but the object of the other was

manifestly to gratify her sense of sight, rather than that of smell.

In the centre of the bouquet was placed a green leaf of the chestnut tree, tightly folded up, with the stem of a small rose thrust into it.

This the lynx-eye of the lady discovered at a glance, and taking the liberty to draw it out, she found it to contain a tiny epistle, without any address, but bearing the initials of L. L.

“This is for me, I presume,” she said, putting the same into her pocket unopened.

Agnes and her sister nearly sunk upon the ground. They spoke not a word, but looked imploringly into the face of their detective, on whose hard-favoured and loveless countenance there was visible about as much of human sympathy or maiden tenderness as commonly may be found amongst the lineaments of the most callous of thief-catchers.

The elder sister could no longer continue her walk; but taking Grizzel by the hand, as if to support herself, she returned to the house, but

not, is to be feared, to find an asylum for her distress in the sanctuary of a mother's bosom. No, but rather to surrender herself up like a hopeless criminal to the hands of justice.

## CHAPTER XV.

## AGNES KEITH UNDER RESTRAINT.

OUR love and reverence for the sacred name of mother compel us here to pause and turn aside from a full revelation of the scene that followed this simple incident. Most probably, as we already stand, our fidelity or consistency in what we have now narrated, and are about to narrate, may by some tender parents be more than questioned. On this point, however, we have only to invite such humane and charitable individuals to cast their eyes abroad upon the living world around them, to dive into some of those splendid mansions that excite our admiration, draw aside



those silken curtains that veil out the sun's light, witness the moving scenes that are therein enacted with some of our imperious mammas, and they will, we are assured, acquit us of the charge of exaggeration. Who of us acquainted with France require to be told that marriages there are commonly effected by intrigue—seldom by love?

Detected and convicted, as we have seen, beyond appeal, Agnes Keith must now expiate her offence by the adoption of one of two alternatives—namely, to at once give her hand to Sir Francis Heronshaw, or submit to a further curtailment of her personal liberty. Her consent to the former neither entreaty nor persecution could wring from her. To the latter she resigned herself accordingly; and with that resignation, which in itself soothes down affliction, she, with her sister—for loving Grizzel was determined to share her lot—were peremptorily forbidden to again enter the stable-yard, to hold conversation with any person, except their attendant, within or without the walls of the house, or to walk in

any other portion of the grounds or park but upon a large open space, within view of the mansion, and this only in the company of their *duenna*.

Under this rigorous course of penance only one act of indulgence was extended to her, and for this indulgence she was indebted to the baronet, who had generosity or policy enough to interpose his influence in high quarters for its attainment.

This consisted simply in the privilege to retain as her pet companion the trained falcon, which had been presented to her in her father's presence some years previously by Lorance Langton, and to which, from its sagacity and attachment to its mistress, she had become passionately fond.

To have deprived her of this, now, when every other source of pleasure was closed against her, would have been, so reasoned Sir Francis, an act of useless and gratuitous severity, of which he could not approve.

Agnes was therefore allowed to retain her bird,

and, as was customary, to carry it out when walking, and exercise it on the wing on the open ground by means of the lure.

Though not learned in the art of falconry, Sir Francis Heronshaw was a professed admirer of the ancient sport, and especially of the noble birds employed in it. And although, for the promotion, as he supposed, of his own interest with the young lady, he could have cordially sanctioned the removal of this hawk, along with every other memorial of one upon whom he looked as the chief stumbling-block in his way to favour, yet he dreaded the consequences of openly participating in the act, lest, in the event of her father's return to his home (certainly not expected) he might in some degree be held responsible for it.

A considerable sensation had already been created at the Kymes by the loss of its mate, which was reported to have broken loose, strayed away, and been shot by a neighbouring game-keeper.

Nevertheless, to supplant this bird in the affections of its mistress, was an object which had frequently dwelt upon the minds of Sir Francis and his coadjutor, Mr. Andrew Corby ; and while secretly fostering this cherished purpose a device at length occurred to them, which promised fair for success.

This was in substance to procure, if possible, a similar trained bird, to take its place, and to be presented by the Baronet.

Accordingly the two gentlemen, turned their eyes upon Mr. Ranold, of Cranmore, and forthwith made known their wishes to that sporting gentleman.

A draught tiercel from his famous mews was immediately accorded ; and on the same day, clothed with his complement of furniture, the bird was conveyed to the Kymes, there to await a befitting opportunity for its presentation.

Meanwhile, Agnes Keith, accompanied by her sister, with their attendant daughter of Nox, in the name of Miss Stork, betakes herself to her

prescribed and daily walk in the park ; and duly, at the hour of two, her faithful bird, released from his hood and leash, is allowed his freedom in the air, and to soar aloft into the clouds.

During this exercise, one of his playful eccentricities is to occasionally dash off to a considerable distance after a stray crow or other large fowl, give it a few cuffs in the air, then return to his mistress.

Not unfrequently this frolicsome spirit will carry him so far abroad that he will continue out of sight for several minutes at a time.

It may be remarked, as another peculiarity in falconry, that no person but the falconer, or party who feeds and attends on the hawk, is permitted to approach him when he descends to the lure, or brings his quarry to the ground, spectators at all times being required to remain at a respectful distance ; for a falcon will not be either bribed or cajoled into confidence with a stranger ; but, if intruded upon, will rise and resent the affront by resisting his recapture for a time.

Thus undergoing his exercise, it happened on one occasion, when the bird had mounted to an unusual height in the sky that he was observed by his mistress to make a sudden dart off upon a rapid pace in pursuit, as was supposed, of some quarry that had attracted his sight from a distance. He remained absent for a time ; and on his return he appeared somewhat laboured in his flight, as if hurt or encumbered by some extraneous weight.

He readily came down to the lure, and, on examination, Agnes discovered something attached to one of his legs, placed higher up than his bell and entirely covered by the pendent or high feathers.

On feeding him she softly removed it, and found that it consisted of a small scrip of written paper, bound tightly up by a silken thread.

Without further perusal she placed it safely into her gauntlet, upon her hand, where the noble bird now took his stand, received his hood, and was borne back by his mistress to her com-

panions, who had meanwhile taken a seat upon the dry turf, but now arose, and the party retraced their steps homeward.

With as little delay as ceremony, on entering the hall, Agnes and her sister parted from their companion, and proceeded to their own rooms.

Doors shut, the secret was soon disclosed to Grizzel, and the air-borne message joyfully placed before her.

Its substance was brief.

“ Sweet Agnes, I know all. To-morrow again at two. Steen is now with me, whom the hawk knows.

“ Yours affectionately,

“ L. L.”

In a few seconds tears and kisses had almost obliterated the few words, but in their brevity they had conveyed a reviving gleam of sunshine to two young and clouded brows.

The scrip was speedily secured in the owner's



escritoir, and the remainder of the day passed away more cheerily.

On the following morning the two sisters paid an early visit to the noble bird, then sitting on his block under his canopy. On their approach he sounded his bells and flapped his wings joyfully. When his bright eyes met those of his mistress now by his side, he jumped upon her hand and received his morning caresses with the affection of a child. Upon his brave wing now depended the only hope and joy of these two helpless and loving sisters. Ah! had the gallant bird but known the depth of their distress, and been equal to do the whole battle for them, how soon had the victory been theirs.

The heavy hours had never lagged so tardily as upon this morning up till two o'clock. But the snail and the swallow arrive alike at their respective goals, and so at last did here the reluctant footsteps of time.

From the feathered hero never had the hood been sprung, or leash withdrawn with a more nervous hand, than on this day in the park.

Agnes, leaving her companions a little on her rear, as usual, advanced a few paces on the open sward, then outstretched her left arm, upon the wrist of which rested the hopeful messenger of the air.

The bells were bright as gold fresh from the mint, the new jessies were soft and elastic, and she had never gazed upon him with more intense interest.

He drew himself up, shook his feathers, roused, glanced around him, then, expanding his wings, flung himself forward into the air with a joyful rattle of his bells. For some time he soared round her in circles, mounting higher and still higher as he gyrated; and when he had attained to a certain pitch, away he sped, as before, straight as an arrow, in the direction of an open moor.

We will now follow the flight of this little truant, and endeavour to discover what attraction there is to be found for him upon this heathery wilderness.

First then, there is Lorance Langton, with a telescope in his hand; secondly, there is one

William Steen, his former falconer (now returned to the service of the Crypt), exercising his voice and casting a lure aloft into the air. The bird espies the distant signal, recognises the well-known voice of his former keeper, and alights at his feet; and lastly, resting at full length upon the blooming sod, lies the prince of all elderly butlers, Nathaniel Saunders, to whose inventive faculties his young master is indebted for establishing a "postal communication" through the air with the Kymes.

But at this moment there are two other wistful eyes turned in the direction of this scene. Never had the return of the bird been regarded with so much anxiety.

Agnes Keith looks and looks again, with fond impatience, upon his former track in the vast ærial expanse. At length she discovers something like a small speck stirring in the distance. It is her bird : and he is hastening to her side : and beneath his fleet wings he bears a response to her morning's epistle.

He descends from the skies, delivers it in

safety, resumes his place on her wrist, and receives his wonted caresses, while his duties for the day are ended.

In this manner, for the continuance of several days, this ingenious mode of correspondence was steadily maintained on both sides ; but, as with all mundane undertakings, these airy enterprises must have their beginnings, their interruptions, and their endings.

Now, it happened upon one occasion, when the ladies were proceeding in their ordinary manner in the park, that the younger sister observed a figure resembling that of Mr. Corby lurking about a thicket of trees at some distance from where they were situated.

The falcon, charged with his mission, had just been let off into the air ; but while in the act of mounting he was suddenly attracted by a domestic pigeon, which appeared to issue from the same thicket, whereupon he immediately gave it chase.

From its mode of flight, the pigeon was evi-

dently encumbered by some artificial weight ; but owing to the advantage it had over the hawk by a length of start, it succeeded in reaching and escaping in a distant cover.

The hawk now rose in the air, made a circle or two over the spot, then turned away, and was soon out of sight.

But the troubles and perils of the pigeon were not yet at an end.

It was speedily recaptured, its wings plucked, then placed in a more conspicuous position, somewhat nearer to the house.

Soon the tinkle of bells was again heard in the air, and by the next minute the hapless dove was in the talons of its enemy.

Here the struggle for life was but short, for within a few seconds more the report of a gun resounded through the woods, and the two birds were killed by the same shot.

Life in them had hardly become extinct, when Mr. Corby had furnished to Mrs. Keith and Sir Francis Heronshaw a gratifying proof of his

skill as a sportsman, by the production of a dead falcon, which he had shot upon a trap he had placed for it.

The exhibition of the spoil, however, was secretly made, and the carcass of the bird carefully concealed from all other eyes.

Following this feat, and within half-an-hour from the report of the gun, the ladies in the park were observed from the windows, moving slowly on towards the house.

A scene of sorrow and sadness was now expected.

Miss Stork, tall, spare, and erect, with lean neck and thin legs, looked almost rosy, by her exposure to the sun and fresh air, as she stalked majestically by the side of her youthful charge.

Little Grizzel was carrying in her hand her sister's lure, occasionally swinging it round her head, and throwing it into the air; while Agnes, walking between her companions, had her eyes alternately turned upon the ground and upon her faithful bird, which now, crowned with its

crimsoned hood, sat in a state of perfect repose upon her slender wrist.

The party within, on beholding the hawk, were struck with amazement.

“In the name of G——, Corby, what have you done?” exclaimed the baronet, impatiently, as he paced rapidly out of the room, followed by the party spoken to.

The other had no reply to make, but the two hastened on to an out-building in which their own hawk had been secreted. Upon entering this compartment, which was an empty loft or granary, to their intense mortification, they saw nothing but a vacant perch and the deserted leash. The jessies had been severed, and the bird flown. It had escaped through an open window. But how had this come to pass? The door was locked when they approached it, and the window, as usual, had been closed when they last left the chamber, yet was now open. Had some person entered in their absence and liberated the bird? The mystery could not be explained.



Mr. Corby had his "suspicions."

This much only became certain—viz., that upon attaining its liberty the hawk had hovered for a time about the premises, and seeing the bait that had been placed to entrap another, had itself become the victim.

## CHAPTER XVI.

SIR FRANCIS HERONSHAW AND MR. CORBY

DELIBERATE ON THE MOOR.

It was not until two days following the catastrophe had passed tranquilly over, that Agnes Keith became apprised of the danger from which her bird had escaped, and of the untimely end of that one intended by her knightly suitor to fill its place. For this information she was indebted to her sister—for despite of laws, locks, and warders, clever Grizzel found means of keeping up her knowledge of the outer world.

Agnes had indeed heard the report of the gun, and knew it to be in the direction which her

hawk had taken. But, relying on the extraordinary instinct and sagacity of her favourite, together with its common aversion to strangers, and especially to Mr. Corby, she had innocently reasoned down her apprehension for its safety while absent.

The shot had, however, spread fears in various directions; into the stable yard and across the moor in the vicinity.

But it was not the sharp crack of the fowling piece alone that bore alarm to the "enemy of observation," then stationed almost in view of the scene. With it there occurred also the loss for the day of the "mail-bag," added to the probability of detection, and during the afternoon and on the following morning the anxiety of Lorance Langton, with his falconer, had been intense in the extreme.

Long before the flying time had arrived, the focus of the glass had been adjusted and repeatedly brought to bear upon the distant park.

Two o'clock came, but not the hawk ; ten minutes more were added, and still he did not rise.

Every rook, fowl, or dove that plied a wing above the horizon was closely examined through the double lens.

Lorance, now almost driven to despair, stretched himself down at full length upon the heathery sod, topping an eminence, with the telescope at his eye, thus presenting the appearance of some small piece of ordnance pointing over an earthen battery. In this position he continued for some minutes, when he at length observed a small object resembling a fly to pass the lens. It was difficult to follow it, yet he could note it by turns to rise higher and still higher into the sky, until it appeared an almost indefinable point.

“It is the hawk ! as I live it is the hawk ! Agnes’s hawk, and no other. I know it by its mode of mount.”

These words Lorance muttered to himself, then

springing to his feet, he commanded Steen to ply the lure.

Straight as a shaft from a bow, the bird shot across the sky. Soon the faint sound of the bells was heard in the air, and by the next minute the hawk was on the glove of the falconer. But the speedy messenger must not be detained. The delivery and reception of the "mails" must be effected with royal despatch. He receives his *douceur* in the form of a sweet morsel, as the reward of his fidelity, which in all do not occupy the brief space of five minutes.

Again he is off, and again the glass bears upon him throughout his aerial path. He towers high above the treacherous trees, and descends precisely over the spot from whence he was seen to rise.

Telegrams intimating danger being now exchanged between the correspondents, the bird was not again flown for some days. Nor had the plot by Mr. Corby and his confederates escaped the vigilant eye of one who, during its various

progress, had kept a steady watch upon that gentleman's suspicious movements. Nor was he long allowed to remain insensible of this secret cognizance of his conduct.

Ere that day's sun had set, he had been sternly charged with his nefarious design upon the lady's hawk, and had received in addition a wholesome warning to the effect that if a feather of its wing should henceforth be injured, by whomsoever it should be done, he, and he alone, should be held responsible for the act, and forthwith be doomed to enjoy the realization of his own favourite form of speech of "hang me," on the first tree that "came handiest."

These significant words being again communicated to others in higher quarters, they, probably with a dread of immediate exposure and public scandal, had the immediate effect of obtaining a general vote for the life of the bird.

Meanwhile, the marriage campaign was not allowed to suffer from so trifling a mishap. By recent bulletins the health of Colonel Keith ap-

peared to be progressing favourably; and Mrs. Keith had again tried her powers of persuasion upon her daughter, but clearly with the same result as heretofore. This was immediately followed by another private conference with Sir Francis Heronshaw, whereat the lady expressed her painful disappointment, together with her belief that expostulation with Agnes was utterly hopeless.

"I have done everything," she said, with a sigh, "that a mother could do—even more than my sinking strength has been equal to—to insure the happiness of my daughter. But she is, indeed, her father's child, self-willed and inflexible, and receives my counsel only with tears and disobedience."

The baronet humanely expressed his deep sympathy with the lady.

"I most sincerely wish," he said, "that I could relieve you in part, or whole, of the weighty burden of care and anxiety now devolving upon you in your present single and unaided condi-



tion. But, dearest madam, although I know the act would be my death, yet, in order to procure you some repose and temporary relief in this matter, I fear I must resign your daughter to her own choice and inclinations ; when, perhaps, on due reflection, she may find occasion to repent of her filial disobedience to you, and the consequences of it upon me."

In uttering these words the speaker watched attentively the effects of each sentence upon the countenance of his listener. He had thrown them out merely as does the bee his feelers on alighting upon the cup of a flower when it scents of honey at the bottom.

"Oh ! speak not so," said the lady, beseechingly. "I trust I shall yet find strength enough to support me in the discharge of my duty to my children. But you, Sir Francis, as a man of the world, can you not devise some means of expediting this matter? Really"—and the languid lady lighted up wonderfully—"I do verily believe that all the chivalry and romance of love have

died out since I was a girl. Would you believe it, Sir Francis, that before I was eighteen I was twice asked to run off to Gretna Green, and would, for the romance of the thing, have gone, too, with one of my beaux. It would, I thought, be so nice to enjoy Jock o' Hazeldean in earnest. But on the morning of our intended levant my mother introduced Colonel Keith, and so I changed my mind. I daresay, Sir Francis, you think I was very silly and changeable, as perhaps I was. He! he! he!"

"Forms and customs," replied the baronet, "alter with time; but love is the same throughout all ages. At this day it glows in the human breast with the same ardour—and, madam, I can now speak from experience—as it did with," he was going to say "Adam;" but on second thoughts, thinking the comparison not altogether a happy one, seeing that Moses had given to posterity but a very platonic account of the tender passion in Paradise, he bethought himself

of the most renowned of all orthodox lovers, and settled upon "Solomon."

"Then sweethearts and lovers of late have become less romantic," returned the lady, "for we do not hear of half the number of elopements and runaway marriages there used to be when I was single."

"Such simple modes of wedlock have certainly gone a little out of fashion," replied the gentleman; "yet amongst the many who have preferred Hazeldean's course for expedition, I could mention names that have borne the highest honours of the State."

The disappointments which Mrs. Keith had previously experienced in all her speculations to speedily effect her cherished purpose with her daughter, had now induced her to sound the baronet with respect to the adoption of a more certain course — namely, that of a Border marriage.

With this, or any other measure, that would

accelerate matters, and finally secure to him the prize, Sir Francis was only too eager to accord; but feeling assured that the bride-elect would not meet the proposition with the same cordiality, he thought a little innocent scruple might not appear unbecoming. Trusting, however, if not to the eloquence of his tongue, at least to the persuasive force of a chaise and a pair of fleet horses, together with a liberal fee to the "priest," he was not loth to try the experiment.

At the close of the dialogue it was therefore concluded upon that Mr. Corby and the gallant knight should immediately concert measures for compassing the end.

Houses possessing doors, windows, and key-holes, with light-footed servants gliding to and fro in the passages, cannot at all times be relied upon as the safest places for the discussion of matters of profound secrecy.

Such at least was Mr. Corby's opinion; and although experience had told him that there was

danger in trees and shades, he yet preferred the open air when he had any private business of moment to deliberate upon.

Accordingly, when Sir Francis had intimated to him his desire to hold a consultation with him of some length, he suggested that they should walk out together on to the open moor, where they could speak with freedom.

When they had proceeded to a sufficient distance they sat down upon a slight rise on the dry turf, Mr. Corby remarking the while that "Wild geese are the wisest of all living creatures, for they always selected the open ground for business."

There was not a wall, tree, or shrub within reach of their voices to afford ambuscade for a coney.

Of this, the gentleman, casting his eye around, made certain.

But he omitted to observe an old quarry in the immediate vicinity, then partly hidden from view

by a small mound of earth, overgrown with rank heather.

Sir Francis opened the business by informing his friend of what had passed between him and Mrs. Keith.

"It's the best move," said Corby, "in the whole campaign, provided it succeeds; but it's beset with difficulties as thickly as the thistles stand in that meadow we passed through; and, I fear, with as cankerous ones, too."

"Doubtless," replied the baronet, "but our united purpose must be to anticipate and combat them. The old adage, you know, 'a faint heart,' &c."

"Bold heart, or bold heels, Sir Frank," said Corby, clapping his hand upon the other's shoulder, "I'm your man; but how about the young lady's consent? She's as shy with us both as a plover."

"We have her mother's—at least, her approval."

“ Oh yes ! and I dare say, good soul, to hold herself blameless, when the treacherous abduction comes out, she will have had one of her accommodating headaches, with a visit of old St. Vitus, and had taken to her room, while we treacherously danced off with her daughter. He ! he !—capital. Never read anything better in the newspapers. By Jove ! but you’re a lucky fellow, to have such an ally in the camp of the enemy.”

And Mr. Corby rubbed his two palms together, and laughed heartily.

“ Now, Corby, what I next want to consider, is, how we are best to construct our machinery for action. We must assume that Agnes declines.”

“ Offers some gentle *resistance* to the proffered courtesy, my good Sir Knight—for that’s the English of it,” interrupted the squire, with a laugh.

“ Well ! what then ?” put the baronet.



“Why, follow the advice of the old song, to be sure.

“First woo her fairly,  
E'en late and early,  
As the gentle dove his mate.  
  
Should words then fail,  
Let deeds prevail,  
Obedient to the will of fate.  
  
Then coax and tease her,  
Until you please her, &c.—he, he!”

“These execrable lines are your own, Corby; they savour of your cranium,” said Sir Francis, with an assumed air of reproof.

“Mine, or not mine, they must be your motto, or you lose your maiden, and I my blue toga and yellow buttons,” answered Corby, promptly.

“How shall we get her off?”

“Nothing simpler than the first start. The difficulties will just begin when we get her off her own beat, and into our own especial keeping.”

“Of that too, I have some apprehensions,” said the baronet; “but some stratagem must

first be employed to bring her into our safe keeping."

"That, in my opinion," said Corby, "is a simple affair. At the start, the main difficulty will be, to separate the two sisters, without alarming either. Grizzel is as sharp as a squirrel, and as acute as a magpie."

"For that, I think we might employ successfully a simple device."

"What is that?"

"Get her mother to say she wishes to be again upon civil terms at the Crypt, and prevail upon her to be driven thither in the gig by the groom, to see Miss Murray and her favourite Langton."

"Good—she'll jump at the bait like a silver smelt."

"Grizzel thus disposed of," continued the baronet, fervently, "Mrs. Keith will propose that Agnes and Miss Stork take an airing in the chaise. The new coachman, being in the interest of his mistress, will drive without question

whithersoever he is bidden by her. And, to ensure acquiescence the more readily with Agnes, I will decline in her presence to join the party."

"Better still," said Corby; "but where must they drive to?"

"That is for you and me to name," answered Sir Francis. "I propose Ling Forest, upon the high road for the south, where the public coach has been frequently robbed. And now it is for us to devise what must follow."

"Of course, after the manner of novelists, make that the rendezvous.—Have a post-chaise in readiness, either hid in the wood, or otherwise. You and I be on the spot. Contrive some ruse; and win the prize on the Scotch Border."

"Exactly; but in order to provide against disappointment there, I would suggest that you ride over to the village of Clanculloch, two miles on this side of the forest, and previously engage at the 'Royal Stag,' the post-inn there, a chaise, with a pair of merry-footed nags, to be held in readiness at an hour's notice.

“That shall be done, my good knight,” answered Corby, gleefully. “But how fix a day? The weather is as uncertain as the ladies themselves, and these, I vow, are tenfold more capricious than trouts in a stream. The morning must be fine, and who can bespeak that?”

“That must, undoubtedly, be selected,” said Sir Francis. “But could we not despatch a confidential messenger early on the morning contemplated? Of course, to avoid suspicion, you and I must appear as usual at the breakfast table.”

“There is not a soul about the Kymes to be safely entrusted with such a message. These Highlanders are as cunning as foxes; they would at once think there was something up—squint into, or open the note, and blab the matter all over the parish.”

“How, then, shall we manage?”

“I’ve just been thinking. Hang me! but I have it. Frazer, the innkeeper, has some of the finest carrier pigeons in the kingdom. I know him well, and shall borrow one of them to keep

by me for a day or two, when we are about ready for the enterprise. Then, on the momentous morning, I shall let off my caged messenger with a note, which will skip over the seven miles in a twinkling, and keep the secret like a confessor."

"By Jove! Corby, the best idea you ever conceived," exclaimed the baronet, rising.

"And what makes it better still—we shall have made sure of the will of the ladies on the same morning," added the other.

Vastly elated and pleased with their plans, the two gentlemen now arose and retraced their footsteps homewards.

Mrs. Keith was speedily put into possession of the various bearings of the scheme, who cordially undertook the performance of her part of the drama, promising to do her best to put off her headache till after the "bridal breakfast."

Little Grizzel was charmed with the idea of her visit to the Crypt; and, anticipating the event, she had obtained her sister's permission to

take with her the faithful hawk, that it might be shown to Miss Murray, who had often expressed an attachment for the bird. This being arranged, the key of the mews was again handed over to Richard Kay, in order that he might have ready access therein, for the purpose of brushing up the furniture of the bird preparatory to the event.

A relaxation of the stringent laws having meanwhile taken place, Grizzel was now permitted to resume her occasional visits to the stable yard.

Proceeding thither one evening, she saw Kay in company with a stranger, and apparently in grave conversation with him, upon which she suddenly turned round to retreat; but the groom, observing her, called her to him, while the other moved away.

By a glance of her sharp eye she read on the countenance of the old servant that something serious was pressing upon his mind. She did not venture to enquire what it was, and he abstained from making any communication to her. He only remarked that he was glad the key of the mews

was again in his possession, and requested that Grizzel would be particular in acquainting him on the night before her projected visit to the Crypt was to take place, which she did not omit to do.

On the morning of the fourth day from the date of our deliberations on the moor, all the necessary plans and preparations were in readiness for carrying out the premediated plot. The breakfast table was set out with some slight extra ornamentation, and the family muster was complete. The weather promised fair for a fine day, and the disposal of the several members was to be as follows. St. Vitus was to conduct Mrs. Keith to her chamber; her eldest daughter and Miss Stork were to proceed in the carriage to visit some distant waterfalls; Grizzel, with her groom, were to pay a visit to the Crypt; while the baronet and Mr. Corby were to arm themselves with rods and creels for a fishing match.

Upon Mr. Corby devolved the first—the initia-



tory move in the game of the day. Accordingly, rising to his feet before the ladies had left the table, he craved permission to leave in order to give some instruction to the servant, which he had forgotten, respecting his piscatory enterprise. He then left and proceeded directly to a room in which a carrier pigeon was secreted, which he had borrowed for the occasion.

To this bird he quickly attached a small note, then hastened out under the screen of some trees and committed it to the skies.

This took place at about nine o'clock, and the several parties were to disperse at eleven.

When first enlarged, the pigeon did not rise in the air with the usual rapidity ; yet, after making a small circle or two and getting its head into the proper direction, it soon disappeared beyond the surrounding trees. But it had no sooner cleared the woods and entered fairly upon an open tract of land, which it must traverse for some miles ere it reached its destination, than a falcon darts

out from a thicket on its rear. The latter gave instantaneous chase, the bells whistling through the air by the rapidity of his movement.

The pigeon had all the advantage of a certain elevation, together with the distance of over a hundred paces in the start.

But Agnes's falcon disdained all odds. By every stroke of his wing he diminished the space between them, which at once appeared to tell fearfully against the fugitive. Still the pigeon was strong in flight, and bravely led out into the sky.

Of shelter or cover there was none nigh; and upon speed and endurance alone must depend the issue of the contest.

In this exciting manner the two raced on through the air, covering the distance of nearly a mile, when at length, fairly out-pacing his rival, the falcon, by a rapid dash, diverted it from its course, gave it a further turn or two, then brought it gently to the ground.

As if moved by some generous impulse, the

hawk did not proceed to seriously hurt his gallant adversary in the race, but kept it steadily down until Steen, the falconer—who had previously been judiciously planted in that locality, it being the direction the dove was thought likely to take—hastened forward to secure both birds.

Meanwhile—returning to our party—and during Mr. Corby's absence, which was brief, little Grizzel proceeded to the stables for the purpose of giving some directions to the groom concerning their drive to the Crypt.

But, to her surprise, Kay was not to be found. From thence she went directly to the mews, but, lo! the hawk was gone also.

She then made a turn round the grounds, and, to her further wonder, she saw the old servant advancing rapidly without the bird, and rubbing the perspiration from his face as if he had undergone some unusual exercise.

"Kay," she said, "I have been looking for you to tell you that I shall be ready in half an hour. But where is the hawk?"

“I’ve just been giving him a bit of a flight, to make him sit quiet on your hand, and Steenie will be here with him in a few minutes,” answered the groom, with a blitheness of countenance, such as he had not borne for some days.

“That’s all right,” and away she ran.

The falconer soon made his appearance, and in half an hour the hawk was on the young lady’s hand in the gig, with Kay by her side, driving slowly down the avenue.

Some few minutes earlier Sir Francis Heronshaw and Mr. Andrew Corby had gone forth on their fishing expedition. The stream chosen flowed some miles distant, and horses were required on the occasion. At the door the open carriage awaits Miss Stork and the destined bride.

Miss Murray could scarcely credit her ears when Grizzel Keith was announced at the door. The delight at seeing her little friend, however, more than compensated for the nervous shock the old lady had sustained by the unexpected event.

But the youthful visitor became sadly downcast upon learning that Lorange had left home after an early breakfast:

Miss Murray actually kissed the hawk, but it is to be observed that the hood was upon its head at the time, and it could not fully appreciate or resent the compliment.

## CHAPTER XVII.

LING FOREST consists of an extensive range of wild woodland, the timbers of which being almost entirely indigenous and of spontaneous growth; and though traversed in sundry places by open glades and rugged passes, the surface of the ground is generally covered with a coat of rank heath and other brushwood. Within its broad expanse the wild deer roves at large, with black cattle and horned sheep almost as wild. It is divided by a high road, which here forms the main trunk of communication between the northern and southern counties in these regions.

Within about a bow-shot from this public way there is an abrupt rise in the forest, which here

commands an extensive view of the country northwards.

Upon this mound there now sit two individuals. They are Sir Francis Heronshaw and Mr. Andrew Corby. Their eyes are turned upon the long line of road, and they appear anxious and impatient.

"The post chaise ought to have been forward ere now," said the baronet to his companion. "I trust the carrier dove went directly home."

"I'll stake my head on the pigeon," answered the other. "I've seen the same bird well tested before to-day."

"But it will be an awkward thing—nay, what shall we do if it does not arrive before the ladies?"

"Don't you alarm yourself, my impatient bridegroom," said Corby. "Frazer's not the man to let so good a piece of grist slip past his mill, nor his postilion to exchange a job at half a guinea per stage for one of half a crown."

"I suppose the masks are in the fishing creels?"



“ Yes, and beside them, ready for donning, lie velveteens and overalls, with those awful-looking bludgeons. By my father’s saint ! but I would rather trust to my heels than to my hands with these dreadful weapons.”

“ We cut them only to intimidate and complete our disguise,” added the baronet, dolefully.

“ Hush !” ejaculated Corby. “ I thought I heard some one in the wood. But I dare say it’s some of those infernal wild cattle, which are as dangerous as buffaloes in these parts.”

The ears of Mr. Corby were correct, but his inference was at fault.

In a thicket of the wood, within a convenient distance from where the two sat, there stood at that moment other two men, peering through the leafy boughs upon them. Nor were these men inferiorly equipped to their rivals. They had staves, masks, and vestments for disguise, all ready for use at any given moment.

The names of these two persons were Lorange Langton and Nathaniel Saunders. Also, planted

on their rear, stood a powerful reserve in the brawney form of the owner of the van.

There is now a little stir in the other camp.

Sir Francis and his comrade are upon their feet. They descry in the distance a carriage; its spokes and mountings glitter in the sun, but the motion is too slow, too sedate for their desire. It creeps onward.

“Zounds!” cried Corby, “It’s Keith’s carriage. There’s a man on the dicky, and I can tell the ladies’ bonnets with the top down. Whatever can have happened?”

“It is Mrs. Keith’s carriage, unquestionably,” repeated the other, mildly.

“What, then, is to be done, Frank? This was not on our programme for the day, and it takes us at disadvantage. We must decide on something promptly,” urged Corby.

“One of two things must be done,” answered Sir Francis—“either mount Agnes upon one of our horses, or allow her to return in peace.”

“Don’t you think she would rebel against the

one? Do you think you could persuade her to ride before you, or singly, on your saddle, till we reached the next post inn, about seven miles hence?"

"I doubt it; but since all is now to be staked upon the chance, I suppose we had better try. The horses are safe, tied to their trees."

"Then on with our masks, and let us bear towards the road. Robberies are common here. You go to the horses' heads—be mute—the coachman will understand, and I will receive the lady." So spoke Sir Francis.

At the spot selected for these operations, there was a slight elevation in the road, which afforded the driver a reasonable excuse for reducing his trotting into a slow walking pace.

Thus it was, when out sallied the mock-robbers, the shorter in stature laying one hand on the reins of the near horse—evidently more afraid of the animal than it of him—and in the other he brandished a hazel staff, freshly cut from the root.

The carriage instantly stopped; the ladies

shrieked, Miss Stork the louder in voice. The taller robber then advanced on stately steps, opened the door, laid his hand on the arm of his fair cousin, who now affected great alarm and resistance. But resistance she saw was vain—so she signified to her terrified companion—and, with the meekness of a martyr resigning himself to his fate, she suffered herself to be removed and placed on the verge of the forest. The mute and masked actor then returned to the chaise and repeated the same courtesy to her companion, who, after a slight struggle and call for help, was borne to the side of her sister in trouble.

During this enactment, the coachman, whose valour was passionately appealed to by the ladies, declared himself utterly powerless, being under the muzzle of a gun then levelled at his breast from a tree in the wood. He was now signalled to be gone on peril of his life, upon which he tightened up his reins, drew his horses round, and proceeded back for a short space, when, being shaded by trees, he again came to a stand.

Immediately upon the removal of the ladies from their seats, the first robber (in height, Mr. Andrew Corby), disappeared, while the second whispered a few words into the ear of Miss Stork, which that lady interpreted to her companion, signifying that if they were passive and compliant they would fare the better, and that nothing should happen to their lives or honour.

These assurances appeared to have a favourable effect upon the elder spinster.

The two captives were then conducted for a short way into the wood, when presently they observed the advance of the absent brigand with a saddled horse in each hand.

Miss Stork was now placed on the taller animal, against which act of gallantry she most emphatically protested, since, as she declared, she could not ride without a side-saddle, unless held on.

Agnes Keith, seeing no alternative, innocently followed the other's example.

Thus mounted, a man to each horse, the ladies were led onwards, through a narrow pass, beset with brambles and other brushwood.

After progressing for a short distance in this manner, Miss Stork, then in front, appeared to accidentally overbalance herself, but fortunately alighted on her feet; Upon which, Agnes, in the custody of the smaller robber, passed on, and slowly and reluctantly continued her route, she being in expectation that her companion, on remounting, wouldsoon overtake her.

In this hope she was grievously disappointed, for, upon looking behind her, the first object that appeared was the figure of the tall and masked robber occupying her place in the saddle, and rapidly advancing towards her.

Whereupon, seized with an additional alarm, and, in spite of resistance, she left her seat, and reached the ground with her feet.

The horseman, now forward, instantly dismounted, and sprang to the aid of his confederate.

A violent struggle again ensued, and a cry of "help! help!" resounded through the forest.

The crisis of the day was now at hand.

The thrilling cry of the lady's voice was speedily responded.

Unseen but watchful eyes had that day overlooked every stage of the maiden's troubles, and the time for action had arrived.

The irresistible call for help could no longer be forborne; and before the shrill sounds had ceased to vibrate in the air, the noise of crackling twigs under rapid footsteps was heard among the trees.

Nearer and nearer came the sounds to the lady's ear, when, bursting through the interwoven boughs, an athletic youth, alike masked, and armed with a strong staff, stood before the brigands.

Speedily another man, of stouter and stiffer frame, was by his side.

Like his companion, he wore a mask, and in one hand carried a stout pole of about six feet in length, biforked or parted into two horns, widely deflected at the extreme end, while in the other hand he bore a heavy riding-whip, probably not altogether unfamiliar to the eye of one of the former party.



Conceiving all the four to belong to the same band, the affrighted lady now screamed the more.

“Rescue, rescue,” shouted Lorance, disguising his voice, as he sprung forward.

By the next second the taller of the robbers had his staff raised to strike.

But the blow was parried, and ere he had time to make a second effort, his antagonist had closed with him, and wrenched the weapon from his hand.

His captain having thus boldly opened charge upon one of the enemy, the invincible Saunders lost not a moment in rushing upon the other; and so sudden was the onset, and so dexterously was it directed, that before his antagonist had time to decide whether to give battle, or beat a retreat, he got locked in between the prongs of the pole and the trunk of an adjoining tree, against which he was so tightly pressed that his body became utterly powerless.

Following up his advantage thus so cleverly gained, and holding him beyond arm's length,

the sturdy assailant next applied his heavy whip with such hearty good-will to his posterior—Mr. Corby having turned round to fly when too late,—that he roared, writhed, and kicked, from sheer agony.

Thinking his punishment now sufficient, the operator slackened the pressure of his weapon, upon which the other slipped from his limbo, and disappeared in the wood—a wholesome example, which his leader immediately followed.

An uncontrollable burst of laughter now issued from the masks of the two victors, which was quickly answered by another equally significant from a lusty voice among the neighbouring trees.

Her rescue being complete Agnes Keith, supported by her preserver, was now slowly conducted back through the wood to the spot where she had entered it, while the valiant Saunders, sadly out of wind by the brush at battle, followed in the rear—the routed enemy showing no disposition to renew the struggle.

Scarcely a word during this brief and pantomimic scene had been uttered by either of the actors; none by the baronet, or by Saunders; and only a few syllables from Lorange, with some disguised ejaculations from Corby.

Each party, therefore, seemed to have been influenced by the same desire for mystery.

Meanwhile, the owner of the van, who had held himself in reserve in case of need, and who had been a vigilant eye-witness throughout, seeing how victory had declared itself, made a hurried detour in the forest, to intercept the carriage, and delay its departure.

For accomplishing this, sufficient time had been afforded before Miss Stork was enabled to thread her way back and resume her seat.

The lady had heard nothing of the conflict, which was almost momentary, and had, no doubt, considered the plot to have been a perfect success.

The carriage was allowed to move onward for a few paces, when the interceptor suddenly emerged

from the leafy shade, and took up a position directly in the centre of the road, a little in advance of the horses.

The vehicle stopped.

“Coachman,” said he, raising his hat, as if out of respect for the lady inside, whom he could not then see, “hae ye got a spare sate, for a body in need o’ a lift for a few miles?”

Miss Stork stretched out her long neck, and demanded to know why the horses were stopped, while the coachman addressed himself to the other.

“Go about your business,” he said, “you impudent scoundrel. How dare you come in before my horses, and insult the lady by such a request? Be off with yourself instantly, or I’ll lay the whip about your ears;” upon which he flourished the thong in the air.

“Be cannie, Mr. Coachy,” returned the other, retaining his hands in his pockets; “I’ve only put the question t’ye ceevily; and if ye dinna answer it ceevily I canna help it; but I maun

hae a sate, for there are robbers in these wuds; and a single body's no vera safe near them."

"Robbers! cowardly fellow!" retorted the man in livery, "there's nothing of the sort. Ye ought to be ashamed of yourself, sir! a great strong-looking loon like you, to be afraid of your own shadow! Be off, I say, or I'll come down and flog you out of my way."

"Cannie, cannie, I say, Mr. Coachy," answered the other, good-humouredly. "I may tell ye, I'm no commonly thought a coward bee them who ken me; and as to your bit crawl up there, I dinna mind it ony mair than the flaffer o' a bantlen-cock on the midden; and let me advise ye t' stay where ye are, and keep ye're whip doon. I've seen a heavier yin than that the day, and gaye freely used too without breaking ony bones, which ye may yet learn of afore lang. What I've axed for, I maun have, at ony rate. Sae I'll just take the liberty to make sure o't."

Whereupon he drew a chain from his coat-pocket, proceeded to the rear of the carriage,

passed it through the spokes of the two hinder wheels, locked it with a padlock, then walked off in the direction of the rendezvous, saying, as he left, that he would not detain the lady ten minutes.

At this cool and strange proceeding Miss Stork and the servant were utterly confounded; but their amazement was vastly increased when, within less than ten minutes, their uncere- monious visitor was seen returning, with Agnes Keith walking slowly by his side.

“Ye may save yersel’ the trouble o’ gettin’ doon, Mr. Coachy,” he said, on reaching the carriage, “I’ll be flunky for yince mysel’, an’ open the door for the young leddie; for ye ken I bespoke the sate. And now, leddies, I must wish ye a pleasant journey; for I maun hasten back to bury the dead, and see to the wounded.”

So saying, and closing the door after the young lady, he raised his hat politely, released the wheels, and the chaise moved on.

But little conversation passed between the two

ladies during their dull and wearisome journey homeward.

Miss Stork appeared seriously concerned, and was peculiarly taciturn, while her companion looked faint and exhausted, from her violent struggle and alarm.

The former had received an additional thrill to her anxiety, from the closing sentence of the stranger.

On his return to the wood, the stalwart owner of the van indulged his curiosity with a passing glance at the battle-field ; but the vanquished enemy had picked up their horses, and were fled.

He soon rejoined his own company.

Lorance expressed his surprise at their easy victory, and congratulated his companions upon the admirable manner in which each had performed his respective part. As to his valourous squire, he said, from his impetuous rush upon his antagonist, and the very ingenious mode in which he had given him battle, and finally dis-



posed of him, he had justly earned for himself the highest honours of the campaign.

The party then betook themselves to their horses, which they had secreted in an adjoining part of the forest, where they remounted and proceeded leisurely across a wild tract of country, in the direction of the Crypt.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

AFTER THE BATTLE.—HOW THE CAMPAIGN ENDED.

HAD Mrs. Keith met her daughter on her return to the Kymes in the form of a disembodied spirit, or an “armed rhinoceros,” she would probably have received no greater a shock to her nervous sensibilities than fell to her lot when her eyes first alighted upon that pale and trembling figure in material substance, as she now sought her chamber in her joyless home. When a midnight burglar has made good his entry into the devoted house, has loaded himself with the owner’s plate, and, deeming all secure, is hastening off on tiptoe to transfer the booty to

his comrade at the door, but, instead of meeting his fellow felon, is sudden'y confronted by a police constable, the ruffian's astonishment may be readily conceived. Aptly similar was now the state of this lady, when, upon hearing the sound of the returned carriage below, she, from a spirit of impatience, had left her "sick-chamber" to congratulate Miss Stork on the landing of the stairs on the success of their device.

From the unexpected figure, she shrank back with a low shriek, darted within her room, and shot the lock.

The latter act, however, she might have spared herself.

Agnes, conscious of her mother's guilt, had no desire to seek her company.

The sight of the carriage at the door speedily brought little Grizzel up-stairs. She was half breathless from haste and joy, for she had been to the Crypt. But a simple glance at her sister sent the smile and rosy hue from her cheek. She was appalled at her downcast and

overwhelmed appearance, and at once burst into a flood of tears.

The sad story of the day was by fits recounted to her, when all the comfort that artless tenderness and childish love could impart, was freely poured forth from her young heart.

“Oh! Aggie, Aggie! could our dear father only see us at this hour—see us as we are now, watched, and persecuted in our own home. But, Aggie dear, we have no home now!” so uttered and sobbed this distracted child.

But the other had no response to make—only prayers in whisper for her past deliverance.

Having seen our ladies “safe,” though not altogether “sound” home, we must now fall back and gather up the stragglers of the campaign.

“Hang me, if that murderous old villain has left me a morsel of skin to ride on,” said Mr. Corby to the baronet, as he seated himself in his saddle, after the two gentlemen had recovered their stray horses in the forest. “In all my born

days," he continued, " I never found myself in such a cursed fix ; for before I had a moment's warning to either knock the fat monster down or evade the thrust, I found my body locked in between the two iron prongs of his infernal weapon, which I assure you went two inches into the tree by the force, and so tightly was I pinned against it that I am sure my digestion is done for."

" Wooden prongs, you mean," replied the other, indifferently.

" Wooden ones be it then, but they did for me, anyhow," said Corby.

" But outwardly your wounds are all behind, and I trust not altogether mortal," observed the baronet, with a faint smile.

" At all events I think I shall tell wounds in front with my gallant Captain," retorted Corby, with a laugh. " But let us say no more about the blasted business, but rather consider what face we are to put upon it, and upon ourselves when we get home."

" Except that my non-appearance would alarm

Mrs. Keith, I should not return, but stay for the night at the 'Royal Stag.'"

"Home! home! I say we must, before the tide rises too strong against us," said Corby, resuming his spirits. "One secret I will impart to you, my good knight, which is—that although I may not be the foremost against cuts and blows, I am the last to surrender, or to know when defeated. Leave the management to me, and I will carry you through the rest of the day triumphantly."

"How so?"

"Swear black is white; and that we have not this day set foot in the forest. Practice an old dodge among anglers—purchase a creel full of fish by the road. I know where we can get a supply at any hour. Display our spotted witnesses on the board; appear blithe and jolly, and we retrieve our lost honours."

"But what of Agnes?" inquired the other. "Don't you think she recognized you when you dropped the mask?"

“Bah! have not I two witnesses to one?—yourself and Miss Stork. Why, man,” added Corby, with one of his comical grins, “if it came to that in a public court, I should have but little difficulty in turning the tables, and proving that the other were the guilty party, seeing that they were in masks; as for what good purpose were they there in such disguise, I would ask?—and that we, learning of their design—and Langton’s partiality for Agnes is well known—hastened to the spot for her preservation, arrayed ourselves in a similar disguise to avoid their suspicion, defeated them in a hand to hand struggle, restored the captive to Miss Stork and the coachman, who would stand by us, then we betook ourselves to an angling expedition, and the fish would be our vouchers there. Half-a-crown would silence the poaching scoundrel with the net who supplied the trout. There would probably be some heavy cross-swearing, but what of that? One oath is as good in law as another.”

“But how dispose of the big fellow’s evidence, who conveyed Agnes back to the carriage?”



“The easiest thing in the world. Vow right off that he was a perjured man, a smuggler—which I could prove—declare him to be an outlaw, a wandering vagabond, without a habitation or local standing anywhere, and inadmissible within the walls of any Christian court of law—he belonging to no church that I know of.”

“In that case it were well that you had not some of our sharp English criminal lawyers for the defence, Corby,” replied the baronet. “But let us proceed a little faster.”

Taking some cottages on their route homewards, Corby alighted and procured the fish spoken of.

They arrived too late at the Kymes for the ordinary dinner hour, and dined by themselves. On the following morning trouts were served up to breakfast, but Agnes and her sister declined to leave their room. Some of the fish were sent up-stairs, but came back untasted.

When Lorance Langton and his followers arrived at the Crypt, he desired that the owner of the van should be sumptuously entertained with

the butler in the servants' hall, and, when his own dinner was over, that the two should proceed to his private sitting room, in which wine and spirits were to be set out, and where they should meet together to talk over the events of the day.

In reviewing these proceedings, Lorange first expressed his delight with the admirable manner in which the capture of the carrier dove by the gallant falcon had been effected ; and signified his regret that the faithful Richard Kay was not then present to receive his heartfelt thanks for the part he had taken in the exploit. He was also much gratified, he said, on learning that the innocent pigeon had sustained no serious injury, but, after being eased of its burdensome note, was allowed to resume its journey homewards. As for the wife of the worthy groom, who, whether by chance or otherwise, had gone to the quarry to pick up sand, and had over-heard the framing of the whole plot, he thought she deserved the erection of a statue to her memory ; for without her timely revela-

tion, the misery of Miss Keith had that day been completed.

Lorance next entered into a slight explanation in reference to his own personal interest in the matter in which they had been engaged. His desire, he assured them, was not, as what may probably have been inferred, to endeavour to obtain for himself the hand of Miss Keith, or seek to involve the young lady or himself prematurely in the trammels and cares of matrimony. Wisdom and prudence must preclude such ridiculous thoughts from the minds of both at their ages. Yet, from the several years in which they had lived and grown up together, with sisterly and brotherly affection for each other, he felt all the interest in her happiness and welfare that a brother could feel, whatever more he might inwardly experience. And now, when her natural protector, her noble and generous father, who had acted the part of an affectionate parent to himself, was prostrated by affliction, and far from her help at such a time of need, he felt the more

imperatively called upon to exert himself on her behalf. He would abstain, he said, from commenting upon the behaviour of her unnatural mother. But he must denounce the cowardly, unmanly, and heartless conduct of that man who seeks to perpetuate another's misery that he may luxuriate upon her spoil. He could desire no nobler post of duty, did his time permit, which it would not now do, than to watch, even from a distance, over the lot and interests of those two cruelly-treated children, and to defeat in every conceivable form the designs of their persecutors. However, he now trusted that the humiliating lesson which had that day been so frankly administered to the desperate suitor and his confederate poltroon, would be sufficient to deter them from trying their game over again at amateur brigandage, and would compel them to retire for the present to some other locality, where they might escape the odium and public scandal which their conduct must ere now have raised up around them. This he most sincerely trusted, and that

the two tender and helpless sisters, without a friend near them but the faithful old Kay, will now be released from the harsh and unnatural restraints which of late they have been so cruelly subjected to.

“But, Maister Lorry, as our captain,” said the travelling merchant, “ye’re surely no going to take leave of your troops, after winnin’ the battle, afore the enemy’s fort is called on for an unconditional surrender.”

“What terms would you demand?” enquired Lorange, with a smile.

“I would require a written guarantee from the governess that the two young leddies, her daughters, heretofore kept in captivity, shall be restored to their natural liberty, and that her gallant captain, with Corporal Corby, shall be sent forth on parole to a distance of not less than fifty miles from the Kymes, for the space of six calendar months, otherwise until Colonel Keith’s return to his home. These I would demand on behoof of the young leddies, on behoof of the respectability

of the neighbourhood, and on behoof of what is now due to the name of the Colonel."

"But how would you obtain a pledge to such absolute conditions?"

"There may be some difficulty, but I think while the wounds are fresh, and Mr. Corby no over easy in his chair, it might be accomplished nevertheless."

"Why, you surely would not carry military persuasion into the lady's boudoir?"

"No, Maister Lorry; but under favour of your victorious arms, I would employ diplomatic persuasion, which would be fairer play, for with the tongue a woman always meets a man on equal terms, if no something mair, and I would recommend a trial, anyhow."

"Really, my good merchant, you amuse me," returned Lorance, with a laugh. "But by what means, or by whom, would you propose the trial to be made? Shall I bid my trusty squire here—Saunders—to arm himself with his horned weapon and terrible whip, pack his awful pistols

into their holsters, mount his old pony, and ride thus forth upon the Kymes? Or must I promote you to the first post of aide-de-camp, and despatch you thither to hold parley with the good lady herself?"

"Whatever is your will, sir, let it be done, but I'm in favour o' a bit trial, anyhow, with the leddie, an' no very muckle afraid of the upshot o't, though I undertake the business mysil," replied the ambitious diplomatist, with a rub of his palms and a laugh.

"Are you really serious in this matter?" inquired Lorange.

"I am, Maister Lorry, and what is more—for I know the world a little—I will take the whole upon myself," he further added, changing, as was usual with him when it suited his humour or his purpose, from broad Scotch to tolerable English.

This conversation then resulted in the latter undertaking to proceed next day upon this strange mission, very much to the amusement of his "captain." Accordingly, about eleven o'clock



on the following morning, the brawny figure of the owner of the van presented itself in front of the windows at the Kymes. There were sundry eyes upon it, but Mr. Andrew Corby's were not amongst the number.

"Henderson," said Mrs. Keith to the footman, then in the room, "go and see what that fellow wants."

"He wants to speak with you, madam," said the servant, when he had returned from the inquiry.

"Tell him I am not well, and that I don't want anything at this time in his way."

The footman obeyed, but returned with a reply that the man was particularly anxious to see his mistress, and if not convenient for her to give him an audience he wished to have a few words with Sir Francis Heronshaw, as he had something confidential to communicate in which both parties were interested. This message was delivered in the presence of the baronet, and the two imme-

diately retired to an ante-room, and desired the person to be admitted.

In the visitor Sir Francis at once recognised the individual he had formerly seen descend from the tree—elsewhere noticed in our narrative. Indeed, once seen, he was not liable to be mistaken. He stood over six feet, possessed a round, intelligent face, abounding with blunt humour and self-possession, yet not divested of diffidence. On his head, which was now uncovered, he wore a broad brimmed felt hat; his hair was dark, luxuriant, and thickly curled. On his square shoulders he had a velveteen coat, after the fashion of game-keepers; wore corduroy breeches, neatly buttoned at the knees; grey home-spun hose, which displayed his vast calves; and on his feet he had a pair of short boots, tightly laced over the ancles.

“Well, sir, what is it that you have to communicate of such great importance to us?” inquired Mrs. Keith, with a slight abruptness in

her manner, adding, "Something in the eaves-dropping way, I presume?"

"No' exactly that, my leddie," replied the merchant, deferentially. "I've no had ony trystes of late wi' my hard and frickle customers to bring me near their open windows; but ye're no vera far from the mark, for a' that, for I heard what I am going to tell in a private way."

"And what is that, sir, pray?" asked the lady.

"It's anent the business that took place at the Ling Forest yesterday."

Sir Francis startled.

"What took place there, sir, that can interest us?" she inquired, casting her eyes upon the baronet.

"An ugly business, madam," he replied. "An outrage of the laws of the land, which the upholders of the laws and of public rights are taking steps to discover the perpetrators of, and visit them with proper punishment."

A galvanic shock could not have had a more instantaneous effect upon the two listeners than

had these few words. Up to to this moment the lady had endeavoured to maintain an air of supreme indifference in the matter, but now the inward twang was too strong to be withstood. She at once changed colour, and looked as if about to sink upon the floor. Nor was the baronet in a condition to yield her much support. For a time neither could utter a syllable.

“I’m sorry to be the bearer of anything to distress ye, my leddie, or this good gentleman,” he resumed, after a pause, sympathisingly, taking care at the same time to convince the latter that he saw its effects upon him, “but, as I have a great respect for your family, madam, and as I should not like to see you put into the witness box in a public court, or any of your friends transported to Botany Bay, or have all our names in the newspapers—for, ye see, I’m a witness—to be read by everybody, I took the liberty to call and make you acquainted in time with it, and to offer you any service in my humble power to meet it.”

The affectation of ignorance in the matter was now at an end, and after a few further words the unwelcome visitor was taken into the full confidence of the lady, and finally implored to exert himself on her behalf, to avert, if possible, the impending calamity.

The merchant said he had but little in his power, but that little he was most willing to use freely

“I’ll give fifty pounds,” said the baronet, “to have the matter hushed up.”

“I’ll take the money,” replied the other, with an easy promptness stretching out his arm.

Sir Francis put his hands instinctively into his pockets, but they were as empty as his palms.

Mrs. Keith, observing his perplexity, flew to his relief, and at once offered to be his banker on the occasion, but not having the money at hand, she desired him to accept a cheque for the sum.

Upon receiving it, the merchant drew from his pocket a sheaf of small banknotes, from which he counted back forty to the lady.

“ This,” said he, “ will do for the principle witness, who is a poor old woman ”—intending it for a present to Mrs. Kay, the wife of the groom, who had been so valuable an instrument in the discovery of the plot.

“ For myself,” he added, “ the proffer of a bribe of fifty pence in a cause of justice would make of me an enemy to a brother. What I should like now, since no great injury has been done, is to prevent the ugly business from getting into the courts or the newspapers, and I think there is just one effectual way of accomplishing this.”

“ What way is that ?” eagerly inquired Mrs. Keith, ready, apparently, to catch at any floating straw to save her from sinking in her troubles.

“ That is, madam, to get the chief parties out of the way as quickly as possible. I have seen Mr. Langton, who, as Sir Francis knows, must be a powerful witness against him ; and he says, to save his aunt’s feelings, he will leave immediately for London or the Indies, provided the other parties escape the constables in time—(who

would like no better than come plump upon them) —and get out of their reach, over to the English side or the like, where the law is different; so that he might not be put to the trouble of being re-called to give his evidence, in the event of a prosecution. Of course, after the thing had been allowed to blow over for a few quiet months, your friends, madam, might perhaps visit you again with safety.”

Sir Francis, as also the lady, began to breathe with more freedom, while the crafty counsellor, thus adopting a course of intimidation for the attainment of his purpose, now clearly saw that he had the terms of his own making, and taking advantage of a pause which the others did not avail themselves of, he resumed,

“ You see, my leddie, if the chief actors in the business, together with the principle witnesses, were fairly out of the way, we could afford to laugh at the constables, and the newspapers, too, by telling them that the affair was got up by a friendly party, and only for the diversion of a few



young folks. And to give effect to the same, I would suggest that the young ladies be seen visiting at the Crypt, as formerly ; but, understand me, madam, I do not suggest this until after Mr. Langton has left. You may have your own reasons, which is no business of mine to know, for objecting to your daughters' visits without a parent to accompany them, where there is a roving young gentleman for an inmate."

"You speak very sensibly and kindly on that point, too, my friend," said Mrs. Keith, approvingly, "and if that were to serve the cause, I should willingly allow my daughters to visit the Crypt every day of the week, when the young man has gone."

"That part of the business, madam," he answered, "could be easily settled by yourself, if the other parties were only safely out of the way."

One point gained, thought the merchant.

"Mr. Corby and I could leave to-night, Mrs. Keith, or to-morrow, at any rate," interposed the

baronet, addressing the lady. "Indeed, I should prefer to-night ; for I am certain there will now be little sleep with either you, madam, or myself, until I have put a hundred or two of Scotch miles between my head and that ill-starred forest."

Now a burst of laughter nearly broke out from the owner of the van.

"When does Mr. Langton propose leaving?" asked the lady.

"Oh, I did not put that question to him," answered the visitor. "But unless he left immediately"—(he knew that Lorange had been called by his mother to set out for London in two days)—"I think he need not leave at all, nor the other gentleman. But I would recommend him to start within forty-eight hours at latest ; and I know he will be advised a little by me in the matter, for he knows that I am acting a friendly part to him, as well as to your family, madam. I could call and tell you that to-morrow ; but,

you see, he will not know what to do, until I can tell him when the gentlemen here will be safely beyond the reach of the Sheriff and his beagles."

"Tell him then that that will be to-morrow," said Sir Francis.

"But as I'm kened for playing bits o' tricks on my neighbours betimes," said the canny merchant, with a smile, "and lest he might think this yin o' them, and no take my plain word for it, I would like a bit line to convince him o' the truth of your intentions."

"I'll give you that at once," said the baronet.

"But I think it would come better from the leddie herself," proposed the other.

"You are right," said Mrs. Keith, spiritedly; "but what must I say, and to whom shall I write? for I can have no personal correspondence with any of the family."

"I would suggest, madam, that ye address the few lines to me Say, in this easy fashion :—

“ Sir,—

“ You may inform our neighbours at the Crypt that, as Sir Francis Heronshaw and Mr. Corby will leave the Kymes on or before to-morrow, at noon, upon *urgent business*; and as I understand that Mr. Langton’s departure is fixed upon for an early day, I would wish it to be made known there, that so soon as these events have taken place, my daughters will be happy to visit Miss Murray as formerly.”

“ Now, my leddie,” remarked the dictator of the note, “ ye see, this is a cannie mode of conveying the sense, without giving it the appearance of formal intimation, and without committing yourself to direct correspondence with anyone at the Crypt; and it will enable me to laugh at my neighbours, instead of them turning the laugh upon me, or doubting my word.”

The note was speedily written and signed; and when handed to the ambassador, so admirably had he performed his part, and such was the im-

pression he made upon the lady's mind, that she pressed him to partake of some refreshment, (which he gratefully declined), and entreated him to spare no trouble or expense on her own and family's behalf to avert the impending calamity, and further, desired him to again call, in the course of two or three days, to inform her of his success.

As will readily be credited, the production at the Crypt of the ten pounds for the worthy old woman, accompanied by the written voucher for the terms of the treaty, well nigh put Lorance and his doughty squire beside themselves.

Incredulity, amazement, and bursts of laughter followed in succession.

Even Miss Murray herself, when made acquainted with the circumstance, laughed more—by her own averment—than she had done for forty years, the mirth of all that long period taken into account.

The lady was delighted with the prospect of again receiving the frequent and familiar visits of her young friends—all the more desirable now,

since she was on the eve of losing the company of her nephew.

In strict conformity with the terms of the treaty, Lorance Langton, taking an affectionate leave of his doting aunt, and her faithful devoted servant, departed for London.

Owing to the stirring events just related, his visit had been prolonged at the Crypt considerably over the time first contemplated, and his mother had become anxious for his return.

Within two or three days following Miss Murray had the happiness to receive a morning call from the young ladies of the Kymes.

Also, within the time specified in the protocol, Sir Francis Heronshaw and Mr. Corby evacuated the stronghold on the banks of the Iris.

The latter had betaken himself to Glasgow, cut off his stunted whiskers, and assiduously applied himself to the cultivation of a moustache—this, as was thought, to ensure the more effectually his disguise.

The gallant baronet made good his journey to

the English Border, though, it is to be observed, not quite in the style of Jock o' Hazeldean, as at one time meditated.

Their elusion of the sheriff's officers was therefore a perfect success ; and wherefore could it otherwise have been, since the treacherous owner of the van had *winked* at their escape ?

END OF VOL. I.



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THE HAIR!—her lovers swore that it was black—  
Her enemies half-hinted it was grey!  
Until she sent to London for a paquet of MACASSAR OIL, to steal away  
That venerable colour, and bring back  
The glossy ringlets of her early day;  
When curling tresses, jetty, thick, and long,  
Soon proved her foes were weak, and *Rowland* strong.

THE SKIN!—why, old Alfonso would declare  
That alabaster by its side might blush—  
Shamed out of whiteness!—did there not a rare  
And rich Castillian tide of pure blood rush  
Beneath to tinge it; but (which was not fair,)  
To this the envious sneer'd 'pshaw,' and 'tush;  
And so she sent for ROWLAND'S KALYDOR,  
Which proved her lily-whiteness more and more.

HER TEETH!—some scorners said she had a grin, full  
With Æthiop specks;—but reader, by your leave,  
If you'd have seen them, you'd have deem'd it sinful,  
That she should ever laugh within her sleeve;  
You couldn't pick a dot out with a pin.—Full  
Well this row of pearls you will believe  
She owed to ROWLAND:—sceptic, if you wont, O!  
For God's sake brush your own with his ODONTO!

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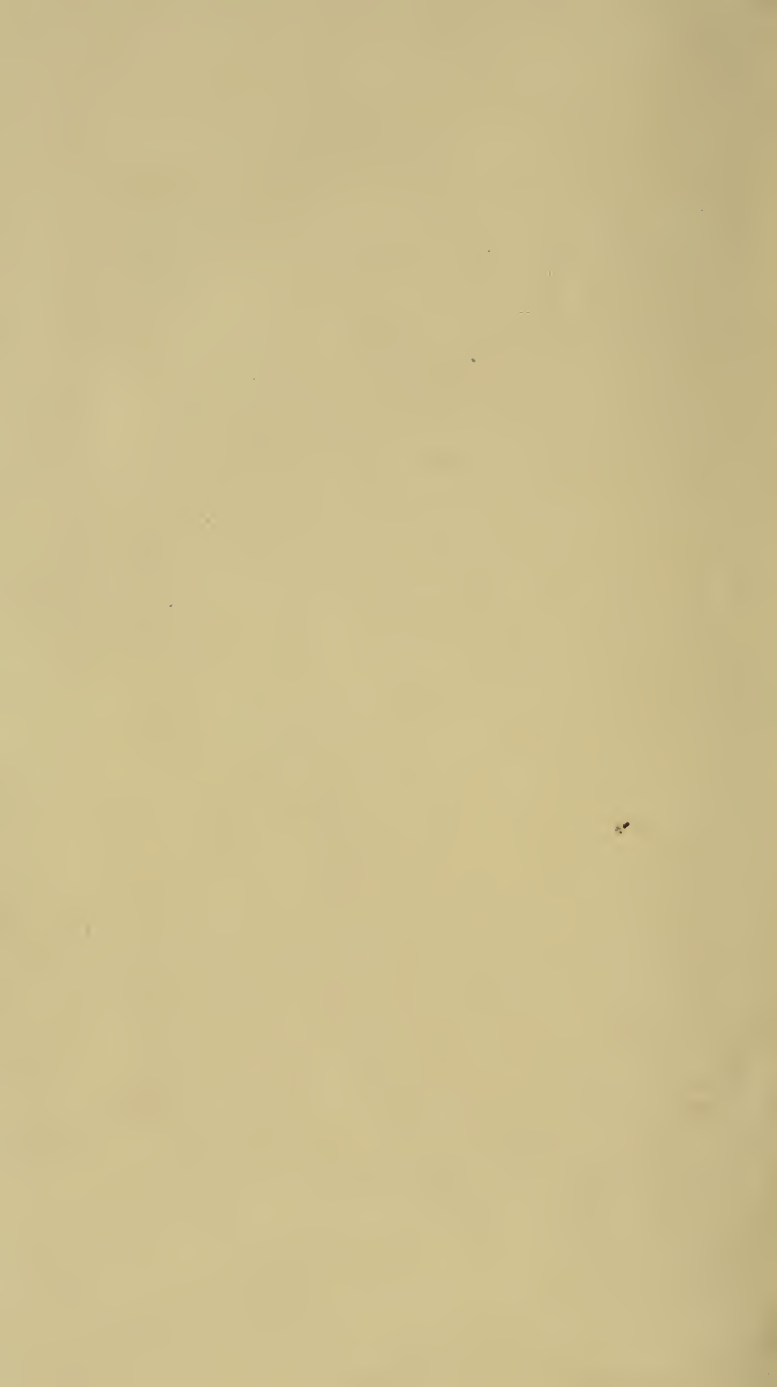
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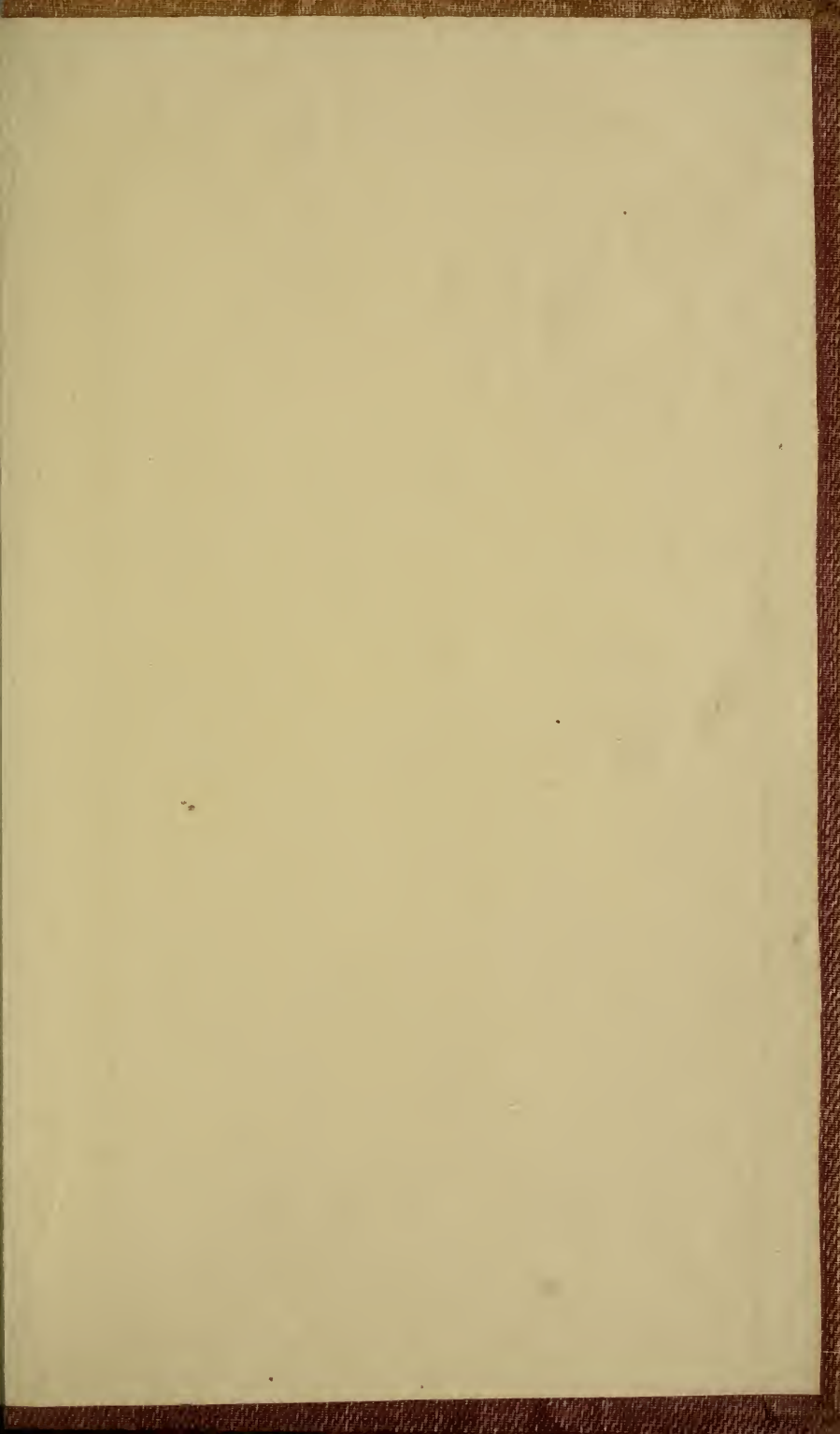
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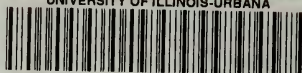








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